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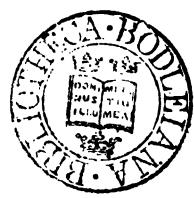
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TONY BUTLER.

CHAPTER I.

THE COTTAGE BESIDE "THE CAUSEWAY."

In a little cleft, not deep enough to be a gorge, between two grassy hills, traversed by a clear stream, too small to be called a river, too wide to be a rivulet, stood, and, I believe, still stands, a little cottage, whose one bay-window elevates it above the condition of a labouring man's, and shows, in its spacious, large-paned, proportions, pretensions to taste as well as station. From that window a coast-line can be seen to which nothing in the kingdom can find the equal. It takes in the bold curve of shore from the "White Rocks" to the Giant's Causeway—a sweep of coast broken by jutting headland and promontory, with sandy bays

nestling between gigantic walls of pillared rock, and showing beneath the green water the tessellated pavement of those broken shafts which our superstition calls Titanic. The desolate rock and ruin of Dunluce, the fairy bridge of Carrig-a-Rede, are visible; and on a commonly clear day Staffa can be seen, its outline only carrying out the strange formation of the columnar rocks close at hand.

This cottage, humble enough in itself, is not relieved in its aspect by the culture around it. A small vegetable garden, rudely fenced with a dry-stone wall, is the only piece of vegetation, for the cutting winds of the North Sea are unfriendly to trees, and the light sandy soil of the hills only favours the fern and the foxglove. Of these, indeed, the growth is luxuriant, and the path which leads down from the highroad to the cottage is cut through what might be called a grove of these leafy greeneries. This same path was not much traversed, and more than once within the year was the billhook required to keep it open, so little intercourse was maintained between the cottage and the world, whose frontier lay about a mile off. A widow and her son, with one servant, were the occupants. It had been a fishing-lodge of her husband's in more prosperous days. His memory and

the cheapness of life in the neighbourhood had decided her in choosing it, lonely and secluded as it was ; and here she had passed fourteen years, her whole care being the education of her boy, a task to which she addressed herself with all the zeal and devotion of her nature. There was, it is true, a village school at Ballintry, about three miles off, to which he went in summer ; but when the dark short days of winter set in with swooping storms of rain and wind, she held him, so far as she could, close prisoner, and pored with him over tasks to the full as difficult to herself as to him. So far as a fine, open-hearted, generous disposition, truthful and straightforward, could make him, he repaid all the love and affection she could bear him. He was well-grown, good-looking, and brave. There was scarcely an exercise of which he was not master ; and whether in the saddle over a stiff country, or on the thwart of a boat in a stormy sea, Tony Butler could hold his own against all competitors. The leap of twenty feet four inches he had made on the level sward was one of the show objects of the village, and the place where he had pitched a fourteen-pound sledge to the top of a cliff was marked by a stone with a rude attempt at an inscription. Fortunate was he if these were

enough for glory, for his gifts scarcely rose to higher things. He was not clever, nor was he very teachable ; his apprehension was not quick, and his memory was bad. The same scatterbrained forgetfulness that he had in little things attended him in more serious ones. Whenever his intellect was called on for a great effort he was sure to be vanquished, and he would sit for hours before an open book as hopeless of mastering it as though the volume were close-clasped and locked before him. Dull men are not generally alive to their own dullness, but Tony was—he saw and felt it very bitterly. He thought, it is true, that there ought to be a way to his intellect, if it could only be discovered, but he owned to himself he had not found it ; and, with some lingering hope of it, he would carry his books to his room and sit down to them with a resolute heart, and ponder, and puzzle, and wonder, till he either fell asleep over the pages, or felt the scalding tears blinding him with the conscious thought that he was not equal to the task before him.

Strange enough, his mother, cheated by that love which filled every avenue of her heart, marked little of this. She thought that Tony had no great taste for music, nor patience enough for drawing.

She fancied he deemed history dry, and rather undervalued geography. If he hated French, it was because he was such an intense Anglican ; and as to figures, his poor dear father had no great skill in them, and indeed his ruined fortune came of tampering with them. Though thus, item by item, she would have been reduced to own that Tony was not much of a scholar, she would unhesitatingly have declared that he was a remarkably gifted boy, and equal to any condition he could be called to fulfil. There was this much of excuse for her credulity—he was a universal favourite. There was not a person of any class who had other than a good word for him ; and this, be it remarked, in a country where people fall into few raptures, and are rarely enthusiasts. The north of Ireland is indeed as cold a soil for the affections as it is ungenial in its vegetation. Love finds it just as hard to thrive as the young larch-trees, nipped as they are by cutting winds and sleety storms ; and to have won favour where it is weighed out so scrupulously, implied no petty desert. There is, however, a rigid sense of justice which never denies to accord its due to each. Tony had gained his reputation by an honest verdict, the award of a jury who had seen him from his childhood and knew him well.

The great house of the county was Sir Arthur Lyle's, and there Tony Butler almost might be said to live. His word was law in the stables, the kennel, the plantations, and the boat-quay. All liked him. Sir Arthur, a stern but hearty old Anglo-Indian; my lady, a fine specimen of town pretension and exclusiveness, cultivated to its last perfection by Oriental indulgence. Isabella—a beauty and a fortune—about to shine at the next drawing-room, liked him; and the widowed daughter of the house, Mrs Trafford, whom many deemed handsomer than her sister, and whose tact and worldly skill made even beauty but one of her attractions, said, he was "a fine creature," and "it was a thousand pities he had not a good estate and a title." Sir Arthur's sons, three in number, were all in India; the two elder in high civil appointments, the younger serving in a regiment of hussars. Their sisters, however, constantly assured Tony that George, Henry, and Mark would be so fond of him, especially Mark, who was the soldier, and who would be charmed to meet with one so fond of all his own pursuits.

It was with sincere pride Mrs Butler saw her son in such favour at the great house—that princely place to which the company came from remote

parts of the kingdom, and to mix with which the neighbouring gentry were only admitted sparingly and at rare intervals ; for Sir Arthur's wealth was to society a sort of crushing power, a kind of social Nasmyth hammer, that smashed and ground down whatever came beneath it. No small distinction was it, therefore, for the widow's son to be there ; not merely admitted and on sufferance, but encouraged, liked, and made much of. Sir Arthur had known Tony's father in India, long long years ago ; indeed it was when Sir Arthur was a very small civil servant, and Captain Butler was a gorgeous aide-de-camp on the Governor-General's staff ; and strange it was, the respect with which the brilliant soldier then inspired him had survived through all the changes and advancements of a successful life, and the likeness the youth bore to his father assisted to strengthen this sentiment. He would have noticed the widow, too, if she had been disposed to accept his attentions ; but she refused all invitations to leave her home, and save at the little meeting-house on a Sunday, where her friend Dr Stewart held forth, was never seen beyond the paling of her garden.

What career Tony was to follow, what he was to do, was an oft-debated question between her and

Dr Stewart, her worthy adviser in spirituals ; and though it was the ever-recurring subject as they sat of an evening in the porch, the solution seemed just as remote as ever—Mrs Butler averring that there was nothing that with a little practice he couldn't do, and the minister sighingly protesting that the world was very full just now, and there was just barely enough for those who were in it.

“ What does he incline to himself, madam ? ” asked the worthy man, as he saw that his speech had rather a discouraging effect.

“ He'd like to follow his father's career, and be a soldier.”

“ Oh dear ! ” sighed out the minister ; “ a man must be rich enough to do without a livelihood that takes to that one. What would you say to the sea ? ”

“ He's too old for the navy. Tony will be twenty in August.”

The minister would have liked to hint that other ships went down into the “ great waters ” as well as those that carried Her Majesty's bunting, but he was faint-hearted and silent.

“ I take it,” said he, after a pause, “ that he has no great mind for the learned professions, as they call them ? ”

“ No inclination whatever, and I cannot say I'm

sorry for it. My poor boy would be lost in that great ocean of worldliness and self-seeking. I don't mean if he were to go into the Church," said she, blushing crimson at the awkwardness of her speech, "but you know he has no vocation for holy orders, and such a choice would be therefore impossible."

"I'm thinking it would not be his line neither," said the old man, dryly. "What o' the mercantile pursuits? You shake your head. Well, there's farming?"

"Farming, my dear Dr Stewart—farming means at least some thousand pounds capital, backed by considerable experience, and, I fear me, my poor Tony is about as wanting in one as in the other."

"Well, ma'am, if the lad can neither be a soldier nor a sailor, nor a merchant, nor a farmer, nor will be a lawyer, a doctor, or a preacher o' the Word, I'm sore pushed to say what there's open to him, except some light business in the way of a shop, or an agency like, which maybe you'd think beneath you."

"I'm certain my son would, sir; and no great shame either that Colonel Walter Butler's son should think so—a C.B. and a Guelph of Hanover, though he never wore the decoration. It is not so easy for us to forget these things as it is for our friends."

This was rather cruel, particularly to one who

had been doing his best to pilot himself through the crooked channels of difficulties, and was just beginning to hope he was in deep water.

“Wouldn’t the Colonel’s friends be likely to give him a helping hand?” said the minister, timidly, and like one not quite sure of his ground.

“I have not asked them, nor is it likely that I will,” said she, sternly; then, seeing in the old man’s face the dismay and discouragement her speech had produced, she added, “My husband’s only brother, Sir Omerod Butler, was not on speaking terms with him for years—indeed, from the time of our marriage. Eleanor Mackay, the Presbyterian minister’s daughter, was thought a *mesalliance*; and maybe it was—I won’t deny it, Doctor. It was deemed a great rise in the world to me, though I never felt it exactly in that way myself. It was *my* pride to think my husband a far greater man than any of his family, and it was *his* to say I had helped him to become so.”

“I’ve heard o’ that too,” was the cautious rejoinder of the old minister.

The memories thus suddenly brought up were too much for the poor widow’s composure, and she had to turn away and wipe the tears from her eyes. “Yes, sir,” said she at last, “my noble-hearted

husband was made to feel through his whole life the scorn of those who would not know his wife, and it is not from such as these my poor boy is to crave assistance. As for Tony himself," said she, with more energy of voice and manner, "he'd never forgive me if I took such a step."

The good minister would fain have rebuked the indulgence of sentiments like these, which had little of forgiveness in their nature. He felt sorely tempted to make the occasion profitable by a word in season; but his sagacity tempered his zeal, and he simply said, "Let bygones be bygones, Mrs Butler, or at all events let them not come back like troubled spirits to disturb the future."

"I will do my best, Doctor," said she, calmly, "and, to do so, I will talk of something else. Can you tell me if there is a Mr Elphinstone in the Ministry now,—in the Cabinet, I mean," said she, correcting herself, for she remembered what the word signifies to Presbyterian ears.

"There's a Sir Harry Elphinstone, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ma'am."

"That must be the same, then; my husband always called him Harry; they were like brothers at the Cape long long ago. Couldn't he do something for Tony, think you?"

"The very man who could ; and maybe, too, in the very sort of career would suit the lad best of all. He's strong of limb and stout of heart, and has brave health—he's just the man to meet the life and enjoy the very accidents of a new world."

"If he could leave me—that is, if I could bear to part with *him*, Doctor," said she, with a thick utterance.

"These are not days, my dear madam, when a mother can tie a son to her apron. The young birds will leave the nest, make it ever so warm and snug for them ; and it was a wise Providence that so decreed it."

"Would there be any impropriety in my writing to Mr—Sir Harry Elphinstone ?" asked she.

"I can see none whatever. It is more than likely that he'll thank you heartily for the chance of serving his old friend's son. Such a great man gives away every day more places than would provide for three generations of either of us ; and it must be a rare pleasure when he can serve the Queen and gladden his own heart together."

"You'd maybe help me with the letter, Doctor," asked she, half diffidently.

"Not a doubt of it, Mrs Butler ; my poor aid is quite at your service : but hadn't we best, first of

all, speir a bit, and see what the lad thinks of it? Let us find out that it's the life he'd take to willingly. It's no by way of reproach to him I say it; but we all know that when a young fellow gets accustomed to ride a blood horse with a groom after him, and eat his soup with a damask napkin over his knees, it's a sore change to mount a mustang and digest raw buffalo."

"If you mean by that, Dr Stewart, that Tony has been spoiled by a life of luxury and indolence, you do him great wrong. The poor dear boy is half heart-broken at times at his purposeless, unprofitable existence. There are days he is so overcome that he can scarcely lift up his head for it. This very morning was one of them; and it was only when Sir Arthur sent over a third time to say, 'You must come; I'll take no excuse'—that I could persuade him to set off. They are expecting young Captain Lyle to-day, and making all sorts of festive preparations to receive him. Tony has charge of the fireworks; and as Sir Arthur says, 'If you leave your chemicals to other hands, the chances are we shall all be blown up together.'"

"I remember the Captain when he was just so high," said the Doctor, holding his hand about three feet from the ground; he used to come to me every

Saturday for a lesson in Scripture—smart enough he was, but a proud sort of boy, that kept his class-fellows at a distance, and when the lesson was over would not speak to one of them. He was the baronet's son, and they were the sons of his father's tradespeople. I remember I made a complaint about him once, I forget for what, but he never came to my house after."

Mrs Butler seemed not to follow the Doctor's speech; indeed, her whole heart was so set on one object and one theme that it was only by an effort she could address herself to any other. The humblest piece in which Tony played was a drama full of interest. Without *him* the stage had no attraction, and she cared not who were the performers. The Doctor, therefore, was some time before he perceived that his edifying reflections on the sins of pride and self-conceit were unheeded. Long experience had taught him tolerance in such matters; he had known even elders to nod; and so he took his hat and said farewell with a good grace, and a promise to help her with her letter to the Secretary of State whenever the time came to write it.

Late on the night of that day in which this conversation occurred, Mrs Butler sat at her writing-desk, essaying for the tenth time how to address

that great man whose favour she would propitiate. Letter-writing had never been her gift, and she distrusted her powers even unfairly in this respect. The present was, besides, a case of some difficulty. She knew nothing of the sort of person she was addressing beyond the fact that he and her husband, when very young men, lived on terms of close intimacy and friendship. It might be that the great minister had forgotten all about that long ago, or might not care to be reminded of it. It might be that her husband, in his sanguine and warm-hearted way, calculated rather on the affection he bestowed than that he should receive, and so deemed the friendship between them a closer and stronger tie than it was. It might be, too — she had heard of such things — that men in power are so besieged by those who assume to have claims upon them, that they lose temper and patience, and indiscriminately class all such applicants as mere hungry place-hunters, presuming upon some accidental meeting — some hap-hazard acquaintance of a few minutes. “And so,” said she, “if he has not heard of my husband for thirty-odd years, he may come to look coldly on this letter of mine, and even ask, Who is Eleanor Butler, and of whom is she the widow? I will simply say to him, The son of the

late Colonel Walter Butler, with whose name his widow believes you are not unacquainted, solicits some assistance on your part, towards—towards—shall I say at once an appointment in one of our colonies, or merely what may forward his pursuits in a new world? I wish I could hit upon something that will not sound like the everyday tune that must ring in his ears; but how can I, when what I seek is the selfsame thing?"

She leaned her head on her hand in thought, and as she pondered, it occurred to her what her husband would have thought of such a step as she was taking. Would Walter have sanctioned it? He was a proud man on such points. He had never asked for anything in his life, and it was one of his sayings—"There was no station that was not too dearly bought at the price of asking for it." She canvassed and debated the question with herself, balancing all that she owed to her husband's memory against all that she ought to attempt for her boy's welfare. It was a matter of no easy solution; but an accident decided for her what all her reasoning failed in; for as she sat thinking, a hurried step was heard on the gravel, and then the well-known sound of Tony's latch-key followed, and he entered the room flushed and heated. He was still

in dinner dress, but his cravat was partly awry, and his look excited and angry.

“Why, my dear Tony,” said she, rising, and parting his hair tenderly on his forehead, “I didn’t look for you here to-night; how came it that you left the Abbey at this hour?”

“Wasn’t it a very good hour to come home?” answered he, curtly. “We dined at eight; I left at half-past eleven. Nothing very unusual in all that.”

“But you always slept there; you had that nice room you told me of.”

“Well, I preferred coming home. I suppose that was reason enough.”

“What has happened, Tony, darling? Tell me frankly and fearlessly what it is that has ruffled you. Who has such a right to know it, or, if need be, to sympathise with you, as your own dear mother?”

“How you run on, mother, and all about nothing! I dine out, and I come back a little earlier than my wont, and immediately you find out that some one has outraged or insulted me.”

“Oh, no, no. I never dreamed of that, my dear boy!” said she, colouring deeply.

“Well, there’s enough about it,” said he, pacing



the room with hasty strides. "What is that you were saying the other day about a Mr Elphinstone — that he was an old friend of my father's, and that they had chummed together long ago ?"

"All these scrawls that you see there," said she, pointing to the table, "have been attempts to write to him, Tony. I was trying to ask him to give you some sort of place somewhere."

"The very thing I want, mother," said he, with a half-bitter laugh—"some sort of place somewhere."

"And," continued she, "I was pondering whether it might not be as well to see if Sir Arthur Lyle wouldn't write to some of his friends in power——"

"Why should we ask him ? What has he to do with it ?" broke he in, hastily. "I'm not the son of an old steward or family coachman, that I want to go about with a black pocket-book stuffed with recommendatory letters. Write simply and fearlessly to this great man—I don't know his rank—and say whose son I am. Leave me to tell him the rest."

"My dear Tony, you little know how such people are overwhelmed with suchlike applications, and what slight chance there is that you will be distinguished from the rest."

"At all events, I shall not have the humiliation

of a patron. If he will do anything for me, it will be for the sake of my father's memory, and I need not be ashamed of that."

"What shall I write, then?" And she took up her pen.

"Sir—I suppose he is Sir; or is he My Lord?"

"No. His name is Sir Harry Elphinstone."

"SIR,—The young man who bears this note is the only son of the late Colonel Walter Butler, C.B. He has no fortune, no profession, no friends, and very little ability. Can you place him in any position where he may acquire some of the three first and can dispense with the last?—Your humble servant,

ELEANOR BUTLER."

"Oh, Tony! you don't think we could send such a letter as this," said she, with a half-sad smile.

"I am certain I could deliver it, mother," said he, gravely, "and I'm sure that it would answer its purpose just as well as a more finished composition."

"Let me at least make a good copy of it," said she, as he folded it up and placed it in an envelope.

"No, no," said he; "just write his name, and all

the fine things that he is sure to be, before and after it, and, as I said before, leave the issue to me."

"And when would you think of going, Tony?"

"To-morrow morning by the steamer that will pass this, on the way to Liverpool. I know the captain, and he will give me a passage; he's always teasing me to take a trip with him."

"To-morrow! but how could you get ready by to-morrow? I'll have to look over all your clothes, Tony."

"My dear little mother," said he, passing his arm round her, and kissing her affectionately, "how easy it is to hold a review where there's only a corporal's guard for inspection! All my efficient movables will fit into a very small portmanteau, and I'll pack it in less than ten minutes."

"I see no necessity for all this haste, particularly where we have so much to consider and talk over. We ought to consult the Doctor, too; he's a warm friend, Tony, and bears you a sincere affection."

"He's a good fellow—I like him anywhere but in the pulpit," muttered he below his breath. "And he'd like to write to his daughter—she's a governess in some family near Putney, I think. I'll go and see her—Dolly and I are old playfellows. I don't know," added he, with a laugh, "whether hockey

and football are part of a polite female education, but if they be, the pupils that have got Dolly Stewart for their governess are in rare luck."

"But why must there be all this hurry?"

"Because it's a whim of mine, dear little mother. Because—but don't ask me for reasons, after having spoiled me for twenty years, and given me my own way in everything. I've got it into my wise head—and you know what a wise head it is—that I'm going to do something very brilliant. You'll puzzle me awfully if you ask me where or how—so just be generous, and don't push me to the wall."

"At all events you'll not go without seeing the Doctor?"

"That I will. I have some experience of him as a questioner in the Scripture-school of a Saturday, and I'll not stand a cross-examination in profane matters from so skilled a hand. Tell him from me that I had one of my flighty fits on me, and that I knew I'd make such a sorry defence if we were to meet, that, in the words of his own song, 'I ran awa' in the morning.'"

She shook her head in silence, and seemed far from satisfied.

"Tell him, however, that I'll go and see Dolly the first day I'm free, and bring him back a full account

of her, how she looks, and what she says of herself."

The thought of his return flashed across the poor mother's heart like sunshine over a landscape, spreading light and gladness everywhere. "And when will that be, Tony?" cried she, looking up into his eyes.

"Let me see. To-morrow will be Wednesday."

"No, Tony—Thursday."

"To be sure, Thursday—Thursday the ninth—Friday, Liverpool; Saturday, London; Sunday will do for a visit to Dolly—I suppose there will be no impropriety in calling on her of a Sunday?"

"The M'Gruders are a Scotch family—I don't know if they'd like it."

"That shall be thought of. Let me see: Monday for the great man, Tuesday and Wednesday to see a little bit of London, and back here by the end of the week."

"Oh! if I thought that, Tony——"

"Well, do think it—believe it, rely upon it. If you like, I'll give up the Tuesday and Wednesday, though I have some very gorgeous speculations about Westminster Abbey, and the Tower, and the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, with the pantomime for a finish in the evening. But you've only

to say the word, and I'll start half an hour after I see the Don in Downing Street."

"No, of course not, darling. I'm not so selfish as that: and if you find that London amuses you, and is not too expensive—for you know, Tony, what a slender purse we have—stay a week—two weeks, Tony, if you like it."

"What a good little woman it is," said he, pressing her towards him, and the big tears trembled in his eyes and rolled heavily along his cheeks. "Now for the ugly part—the money, I mean."

"I have eleven pounds in the house, Tony, if that will do to take with you."

"Do, mother! Of course it will. I don't mean to spend near so much; but how can you spare such a sum? that's the question."

"I just had it by, Tony, for a rainy day, as they call it, or I meant to have made you a smart present on the fourth of next month for your birthday—I forget, indeed, what I intended it for," said she, wiping her eyes, "for this sudden notion of yours has driven everything clean out of my head, and all I can think of is if there be buttons on your shirts, and how many pairs of socks you have."

"I'm sure everything is right; it always is. And now go to bed like a dear little woman, and I'll

come in and say good-bye before I start in the morning."

"No, no, Tony; I'll be up and make you a cup of tea."

"That you shall not. What a fuss to make of a trip to London, as if I was going to Auckland or the Fijee Islands! By the way, mother, wouldn't you come out to me if the great man gave me something very fine and lucrative?—for I can't persuade myself that he won't make me a governor somewhere."

She could not trust herself to speak, and merely clutched his hand in both her own, and held it fast.

"There's another thing," said he, after a short struggle with himself; "there may possibly be notes or messages of one sort or another from Lyle Abbey, and just hint that I've been obliged to leave home for a day or two. You needn't say for where, nor how long; but that I was called away suddenly—too hurriedly to go up and pay my respects, and the rest of it. I'm not quite sure you'll be troubled in this way; but if you should, say what I have told you."

"The Doctor will be sorry not to have said good-bye, Tony."

"I may be back again before he need hear of my

having gone. And now, good-night, dear mother ; I'll come and see you before I start."

When Tony Butler found himself alone in his room, he opened his writing-desk and prepared to write—a task, for him, of no common magnitude and of the very rarest occurrence. What it exacted in the way of strain and effort may be imagined from the swelling of the veins in his forehead, and the crimson patches that formed on his cheeks. "What would I give now," muttered he, "for just ten minutes of ready tact, to express myself suitably—to keep down my own temper, and at the same time make *his* boil over ! If I have ten years of life before me, I'd give five of them to be able to do this ; but I cannot—I cannot ! To say all that I want, and not be a braggart or something worse, requires mind, and judgment, and tact, and twenty other gifts that I have not got ; and I have only to picture him going about with my letter in his hand, showing it to every one, with a sneer at my mode of expression—possibly of my spelling ! Here goes ; my very writing shames me."

"SIR,—The manner I left your father's house last night would require an apology [I wonder if there are two p's in apology] from me, if I had not a

graver one to ask from you. [He read this over fully a dozen times, varying the emphasis, and trying if the meaning it bore, or that he meant it to bear, could be changed by the reading. 'All right,' said he, 'no mistake there.'] There is, however, so much of excuse for your conduct, that you did not know how I was treated by your family—regarded as a friend, and not the Cad you wanted to make me! [Cad reads wrong—vulgar; I suppose it is vulgar, but it means what I intend, and so let it go.] I cannot *make* a quarrel with your father's son. [I'll dash *make*, to show that I could accept one of another's making.] But to avoid the risk, I must avoid the society where I shall meet you. [No; that's not right. Father's son ought to have *him* after it.] Avoid the society where I shall meet him. From this day, therefore, I will not return to the Abbey without I receive that reparation from you which is the right of your faithful servant, T. BUTLER." [I could not write myself, Anthony, if I got five pounds for it.]

Ten miles across a stiff country, straight as the crow flies, would not have "taken as much out" of poor Tony as the composition of this elegant epistle; and though he felt a sincere satisfaction at its completion, he was not by any means satisfied that he

had achieved a success. "No," muttered he, as he sealed it, "my pen will not be my livelihood, that's certain. If it wasn't for the dear mother's sake, I would see what a musket could do ; I'd enlist, to a certainty. It is the best thing for fellows like me." Thus musing and "mooning," he lay down, dressed as he was, and fell asleep. And as he lay, there came a noiseless step to his door, and the handle turned, and his mother drew nigh his bed, and bent over him. "Poor Tony!" muttered she, as her tears gushed out. Poor Tony! what a story in two words was there!—what tender love!—what compassionate sorrow! It was the outburst of a mother's grief for one who was sure to get the worst at the hands of the world!—a cry of anguish for all the sorrows his own warm heart and guileless nature would expose him to—the deceptions, the wrongs, the treacheries that were before him: and yet, in all the selfishness of her love, she would not have had him other than he was! She never wished him to be crafty or worldly-wise. Ten thousand times was he dearer, in all his weakness, than if he had the cunning of the craftiest that ever outschemed their neighbours. "My poor boy," said she, "what hard lessons there are before you! It is well that you have a brave, big heart, as well as a tender one."

He was so like his father, too, as he lay there—no great guarantee for success in life was that! and her tears fell faster as she looked at him; and fearing that her sobs might awake him, she stole silently away, and left the room.

“There’s the steam-whistle, mother; I can just see the smoke over the cliff. I’m off,” said he, as she had dropped off asleep.

“But your breakfast, Tony; I’ll make you a cup of tea.”

“Not for the world; I’m late enough as it is. God bless you, little woman. I’ll be back before you know that I’m gone. Good-bye.”

She could hardly trace the black speck as the boat shot out in the deep gloom of daybreak, and watched it till it rounded the little promontory, when she lost it; and then her sorrow—sorrow that recalled her great desolation—burst forth, and she cried as they only cry who are forsaken. But this was not for long. It was the passion of grief, and her reason soon vanquished it; and as she dried her tears, she said, “Have I not much to be grateful for? What a noble boy he is, and what a brave, good man he may be!”

CHAPTER II.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE IN IRELAND.

THE country-house life of Ireland had—and I would say has, if I were not unhappily drawing on my memory—this advantage over that of England, that it was passed in that season when the country offered all that it had of beauty and attraction—when the grove was leafy, and the blossomy fruit-trees vied in gorgeous colour with the flowery beds beneath them—when the blackbird's mellow song rang through the thicket, and the heavyplash of the trout rose above the ripple of the river—when the deep grass waved like a sea under a summer wind, and the cattle, grouped picturesquely, tempered the noonday heat beneath the spreading elms, or stood contemplatively in the stream, happy in their luxuriant indolence.

What a wealth of enjoyment does such a season offer ! How imperceptibly does the lovely aspect of

nature blend itself day by day with every incident of our lives, stealing its peaceful influence over our troubled hearts, blunting the pangs of our disappointments, calming down the anxieties of our ambitions! How pleasant is the companionship of our book, and doubly, trebly delightful the converse of our friend! How gratefully, too, do we imbibe the health that comes with every charm of colour and sound and form and odour, repeating at every step, "How beautiful the world is, and how enjoyable!"

I am not going to disparage—far be it from me—the fox-cover or the grouse-mountain; but, after all, these are the accidents, not the elements, of country life, which certainly ought to be passed when the woods are choral with the thrush, and the air scented with the apple-blossom—when it is sweet to lie under the weeping-willow beside the stream, or stroll at sunset through the grove, to gain that crested ridge where the red horizon can be seen, and watch the great sun as it sinks in splendour.

Lyle Abbey had not many pretensions to beauty of architecture in itself, or to scenery in its neighbourhood. Nor was it easy to say why a great, bulky, incongruous building, disfigured by painted windows to make it Gothic, should have ever been called an Abbey. It was, however, both roomy

and convenient within. There were fine, lofty, spacious reception-rooms, well lighted and ventilated. Wide corridors led to rows of comfortable chambers, where numbers of guests could be accommodated, and in every detail of fitting and furniture, ease and comfort had been studied with a success that attained perfection.

The grounds—a space of several hundred acres—enclosed within a massive wall, had not more pretensions to beauty than the mansion. There were, it is true, grand points of view—noble stretches of shore and sea-coast to be had from certain eminences, and abundant undulations—some of these wild and picturesque enough; but the great element of all was wanting—there was no foliage, or next to none.

Trees will not grow in this inhospitable climate, or only grow in the clefts and valleys; and even there their stunted growth and scathed branches show that the north-west wind has found them out, twisting their boughs uncouthly towards the eastward, and giving them a semblance to some scared and hooded traveller scudding away before a storm.

Vegetation thrives no better. The grass, of sickly yellow, is only fit for sheep, and there are no traces of those vast tracts of verdure which repre-

sent culture in the south of Ireland. Wealth had fought out the battle bravely, however, and artificial soils and trees and ornamental shrubs, replaced and replaced by others as they died off, combated the ungrateful influences, and won at last a sort of victory. That is to say, the stranger felt, as he passed the gate, that he was entering what seemed an oasis, so wild and dreary and desolate was the region which stretched away for miles on every side.

Some drives and walks had been designed—what will not landscape-gardening do?—with occasional shelter and cover. The majority, however, led over wild, bleak crests—breezy and bracing on fine days, but storm-lashed whenever the wind came, as it will for ten months out of twelve, over the great rolling waters of the Atlantic.

The most striking and picturesque of these walks led along the cliffs over the sea, and indeed so close as to be fenced off by a parapet from the edge of the precipice. It was a costly labour, and never fully carried out—the two miles which had been accomplished figuring for a sum that Sir Arthur declared would have bought the fee-simple of a small estate. It was along this pathway that Captain Lyle sauntered with his two sisters on the

morning after his arrival. It was the show spot of the whole demesne ; and certainly, as regards grand effects of sea view and coast-line, not to be surpassed in the kingdom. They had plotted together in the morning how they would lead Mark in this direction, and, suddenly placing him in one of the most striking spots, enjoy all his wonderment and admiration ; for Mark Lyle had seldom been at home since his "Harrow" days, and the Abbey and its grounds were almost strange to him.

"What are the rocks yonder, Bella ?" said he, listlessly, as he puffed his cigar and pointed seaward.

"The Skerries. Mark, see how the waves beat over that crag. They tried to build a lighthouse here, but the foundations were soon swept away."

"And what is that ? It looks like a dismantled house."

"That is the ruined castle of Dunluce. It belonged to the Antrim family."

"Good heavens ! what a dreary region it all is !" cried he, interrupting. "I declare to you, South Africa is a garden compared to this."

"Oh, Mark, for shame !" said his elder sister. "The kingdom has nothing grander than this coastline from Portrush to Fairhead."

“I’m no judge of its grandeur, but I tell you one thing,—I’d not live here—no, nor would I contract to live six months in a year here—to have the whole estate. This is a fine day, I take it.”

“It is a glorious day,” said Bella.

“Well, it’s just as much as we can do to keep our legs here; and certainly your flattened bonnets and dishevelled hair are no allies to your good looks.”

“Our looks are not in question,” said the elder, tartly. “We were talking of the scenery; and I defy you to tell me where, in all your travels, you have seen its equal.”

“I’ll tell you one thing, Alice, it’s deuced dear at the price we are looking at it; I mean, at the cost of this precious bit of road we stand on. Where did the governor get his engineer?”

“It was Tony planned this—every yard of it,” said Bella, proudly.

“And who is Tony, pray?” said he, superciliously.

“You met him last night—young Butler. He dined here, and sat next Alice.”

“You mean that great hulking fellow, with the attempt at a straw-coloured mustache, who directed the fireworks.”

"I mean that very good-looking young man who coolly removed the powder-flask that you had incautiously forgotten next the rocket-train," said Mrs Trafford.

"And that was Tony!" said he, with a faint sneer.

"Yes, Mark, that was Tony; and if you want to disparage him, let it be to some other than Bella and myself; for he is an old playmate that we both esteem highly, and wish well to."

"I am not surprised at it," said he, languidly. "I never saw a snob yet that couldn't find a woman to defend him; and this fellow, it would seem, has got two."

"Tony a snob!"

"Tony Butler a snob! Just the very thing he is not. Poor boy, there never was one to whom the charge was less applicable."

"Don't be angry, Alice, because I don't admire your rustic friend. In my ignorance I fancied he was a pretentious sort of bumpkin, who talked of things a little out of his reach—such as yachting, steeple-chasing, and the like. Isn't he the son of some poor dependent of the governor's?"

"Nothing of the kind; his mother is a widow, with very narrow means, I believe; but his father

was a colonel, and a distinguished one. As to dependence, there is no such relation between us."

"I am glad of that, for I rather set him down last night."

"Set him down! What do you mean?"

"He was talking somewhat big of 'cross-country riding, and I asked him about his stable, and if his cattle ran more on bone than blood."

"Oh, Mark, you did not do that?" cried Bella, anxiously.

"Yes; and when I saw his confusion, I said, You must let me walk over some morning, and have a look at your nags; for I know from the way you speak of horseflesh I shall see something spicy."

"And what answer did he make?" asked Bella, with an eager look.

"He got very red, crimson indeed, and stammered out, 'You may spare yourself the walk, sir; for the only quadruped I have is a spaniel, and she is blind from age, and stupid.'"

"Who was the snob there, Mark?" said Mrs Trafford, angrily.

"Alice!" said he, raising his eyebrows, and looking at her with a cold astonishment.

"I beg pardon in all humility, Mark," said she,

hastily. "I am very sorry to have offended you; but I forgot myself. I fancied you had been unjust to one we all value very highly, and my tongue outran me."

"These sort of fellows," continued he, as if unheeding her excuses, "only get a footing in houses where there are no men, or at least none of their own age; and thus they are deemed Admirable Crichtons because they can row, or swim, or kill a salmon. Now, when a gentleman does these things, and fifty more of the same sort, nobody knows it. You'll see in a day or two here a friend of mine, a certain Norman Maitland, that will beat your young savage at everything—ride, row, walk, shoot, or single-stick him for whatever he pleases; and yet I'll wager you'll never know from Maitland's manner or conversation that he ever took the lock of a canal in a leap, or shot a jaguar single-handed."

"Is your phenix really coming here?" asked Mrs Trafford, only too glad to get another channel for the conversation.

"Yes; here is what he writes," and he took a note from his pocket. "'I forget, my dear Lyle, whether your chateau be beside the lakes of Killarney, the groves of Blarney, or what other pic-

turesque celebrity your island claims ; but I have vowed you a visit of two days—three, if you insist—but not another if you die for it.' Isn't he droll ?"

" He is insufferably impudent. There is 'a snob' if there ever was one," cried Alice, exultingly.

" Norman Maitland, Norman Maitland a snob ! Why, my dear sister, what will you say next ? Ask the world its opinion of Norman Maitland, for he is just as well known in St Petersburg as Piccadilly, and the ring of his rifle is as familiar on the Himalayas as on a Scotch mountain. There is not a gathering for pleasure, nor a country-house party in the kingdom, would not deem themselves thrice fortunate to secure a passing visit from him, and he is going to give us three days."

" Has he been long in your regiment, Mark ?" asked Mrs Trafford.

" Maitland has never served with us ; he joined us in Simla as a member of our mess, and we call him 'of ours' because he never would dine with the 9th or the 50th. Maitland wouldn't take the command of a division to have the bore and worry of soldiering—and why should he ?"

It was not without astonishment Mark's sisters saw their brother, usually cold and apathetic in his tone, so warmly enthusiastic about his friend Maitland, of whom he continued to talk with rapture, recalling innumerable traits of character and temper, but which unhappily only testified to the success with which he had practised towards the world an amount of impertinence and presumption that seemed scarcely credible.

"If he only be like your portrait, I call him downright detestable," said Mrs Trafford.

"Yes, but you are dying to see him all the same, and so is Bella."

"Let me answer for myself, Mark," said Isabella, "and assure you that, so far from curiosity, I feel an actual repugnance to the thought of meeting him. I don't really know whether the condescending politeness of such a man, or his cool impertinence, is the greater insult."

"Poor Maitland, how will you encounter what is prepared for you!" said he, mockingly; "but courage, girls, I think he'll survive it—only I beg no unnecessary cruelty—no harshness beyond what his own transgressions may call down upon him; and don't condemn him merely, and for no other reason, than because he is the friend of your

brother." And with this speech he turned short round and ascended a steep path at his side, and was lost to their view in a minute.

"Isn't he changed, Alice? Did you ever see any one so altered?"

"Not a bit changed, Bella; he is exactly what he was at the grammar-school, at Harrow, and at Sandhurst—very intolerant to the whole world, as a compensation for the tyranny some one, boy or man as it may be, exercises over him. All his good qualities lie under this veil, and so it was ever with him."

"I wish his friend was not coming."

"And I wish that he had not sent away *ours*, for I'm sure Tony would have been up here before this if something unusual had not occurred."

"Here's a strange piece of news for you, girls," said Sir Arthur, coming towards them. "Tony Butler left for Liverpool in the packet this morning. Barnes, who was seeing his brother off, saw him mount the side of the steamer with his portmanteau in his hand. Is it not singular he should have said nothing about this last night?"

The sisters looked with a certain secret intelligence at each other, but did not speak. "Except, perhaps, he may have told you girls," added he

quickly, and catching the glance that passed between them.

“No, papa,” said Alice, “he said nothing of his intention to us; indeed he was to have ridden over with me this morning to Mount-Leslie, and ask about those private theatricals that have been concerted there for the last two years, but of which all the performers either marry or die off during the rehearsals.”

“Perhaps this all-accomplished friend of Mark’s, who comes here by the end of the week, will give the project his assistance. If the half of what Mark says of him be true, we shall have for our guest one of the wonders of Europe.”

“I wish the Leslies would take me on a visit till he goes,” said Alice.

“And I,” said Bella, “have serious thoughts of a sore throat that will confine me to my room. Brummelism—and I hate it—it is just Brummelism—is somewhat out of vogue at this time of day. It wants the prestige of originality, and it wants the high patronage that once covered it; but there is no sacrifice of self-respect in being amused by it, so let us at least enjoy a hearty laugh, which is more than the adorers of the great Beau himself ever acquired at his expense.”

“At all events, girls, don’t desert the field and leave me alone with the enemy; for this man is just coming when we shall have no one here, as ill luck would have it.”

“Don’t say ill luck, papa,” interposed Bella; “for if he be like what we suspect, he would outrage and affront every one of our acquaintance.”

“Three days are not an eternity,” said he, half gaily, “and we must make the best of it.”

CHAPTER III.

A VERY "FINE GENTLEMAN."

ONE word about Mr Norman Maitland, of whom this history will have something more to say hereafter. He was one of those men, too few in number to form a class, but of which nearly every nation in the Continent has some examples—men with good manners and good means, met with always in the great world—at home in the most exclusive circles, much thought of, much caressed; but of whom, as to family, friends, or belongings, no one can tell anything. They who can recall the society of Paris some forty years back, will remember such a man in Montrond. Rich, accomplished, handsome, and with the most fascinating address, Montrond won his way into circles the barriers to which extended even to royalty; and yet all the world were asking, Who is he?—who knows him? Maitland was another of these. Men con-

stantly canvassed him, agreed that he was not of these "Maitlands" or of those—that nobody was at school with him—none remembered him at Eton or at Rugby. He first burst upon life at Cambridge, where he rode boldly, was a first-rate cricketer, gave splendid wine-parties, wrote a prize poem, and disappeared none ever knew whence or wherefore. He was elected for a borough, but only was seen twice or thrice in the House. He entered the army, but left without joining his regiment. He was to be heard of in every city of Europe, living sumptuously, playing high—more often a loser than a winner. His horses, his carriages, his liveries, were models; and wherever he went his track could be marked in the host of imitators he left behind him. For some four or five years back all that was known of him was in some vague paragraph appearing from time to time that some tourist had met him in the Rocky Mountains, or that he had been seen in Circassia! An archduke on his travels had partaken of his hospitality in the extreme north of India; and one of our naval commanders spoke of dining on board his yacht in the Southern Pacific. Those who were curious about him learned that he was beginning to show some slight touches

of years—how he had grown fatter, some said more serious and grave—and a few censoriously hinted that his beard and mustaches were a shade darker than they used to be. Maitland, in short, was just beginning to drop out of people's minds, when he reappeared once more in England, looking in reality very little altered, save that his dark complexion seemed a little darker from travel, and he was slightly, very slightly, bald on the top of the head.

It was remarked, however, that his old pursuits, which were purely those of pleasure or dissipation, had not, to all appearance, the same hold on him as before. "He never goes down to Tattersall's," "I don't think I have seen him once at the opera," "He has given up play altogether," were the rumours one heard on all sides; and so it was that the young generation, who had only heard of but never seen him, were sorely disappointed in meeting the somewhat quiet, reserved-looking, haughty man, whose wild feats and eccentricities had so often amused them, but who now gave no evidence of being other than a cold, well-bred gentleman.

It was when hastily passing through London, on his return from India, that Mark Lyle had met him, and Maitland had given him a half-careless promise

to come and see him. "I want to go across to Ireland," said he, "and whenever town gets hot, I'll run over." Mark would have heard the same words from a royal duke with less pride, for he had been brought up in his Sandhurst days with great traditions of Maitland; and the favour the great man had extended to him in India, riding his horses, and once sharing his bungalow, had so redounded to his credit in the regiment, that even a tyrannical major had grown bland and gentle to him.

Mark was, however, far from confident that he could rely on his promise. It seemed too bright a prospect to be possible. Maitland, who had never been in Ireland—whom one could, as Mark thought, no more fancy in Ireland than he could imagine a London fine lady passing her mornings in a poor-house, or inspecting the coarse labours of a sewing-school,—*he* coming over to see him! What a triumph, were it only to be true! and now the post told him it was true, and that Maitland would arrive at the Abbey on Saturday. Now, when Mark had turned away so hastily and left his sisters, he began to regret that he had announced the approaching arrival of his friend with such a flourish of trumpets. "I ought to have said nothing whatever about him. I ought simply to have announced him

as a man very well off, and much asked out, and have left the rest to fortune. All I have done by my ill-judged praise has been to awaken prejudice against him, and make them eager to detect flaws, if they can, in his manner—at all events in his temper." The longer he thought over these things the more they distressed him; and at last, so far from being overjoyed, as he expected, at the visit of his distinguished friend, he saw the day of his coming dawn with dismay and misgiving. Indeed, had such a thing as putting him off been possible, it is likely he would have done it.

The long-looked-for and somewhat feared Saturday came at last, and with it came a note of a few lines from Maitland. They were dated from a little village in Wicklow, and ran thus:—

"DEAR L.—I have come down here with a Yankee, whom I chanced upon as a travelling companion, to look at the mines—gold, they call them; and if I am not seduced into a search after nuggets, I shall be with you some time—I cannot define the day—next week. The country is prettier and the people less barbarous than I expected; but I hear your neighbourhood will compensate me for both disappointments.—Yours, N. M."

"Well! are we to send the carriage in to Coleraine for him, Mark?" asked Sir Arthur, as his son continued to read the letter, without lifting his eyes.

"No," said Mark, in some confusion. "This is a sort of put-off. He cannot be here for several days. Some friend or acquaintance has dragged him off in another direction;" and he crushed the note in his hand, afraid of being asked to read or to show it.

"The house will be full after Tuesday, Mark," said Lady Lyle. "The Gores, and the Masseys, and the M'Clintocks will all be here, and Gambier Graham threatens us with himself and his two daughters."

"If they come," broke in Mark, "you'll have my rooms at your disposal."

"I delight in them," said Mrs Trafford; "and if your elegantly fastidious friend should really come, I count upon them to be perfect antidotes to all his impertinence. Sally Graham, and the younger one, whom her father calls 'Dick,' are downright treasures when one is in want of a forlorn hope to storm town-bred pretension."

"If Maitland is to be baited, Alice, I'd rather the bull-ring was somewhere else," said her brother, angrily.

"The real question is, shall we have room for

all these people and their followers?" said Lady Lyle.

"I repeat," said Mark, "that if the Graham girls are to be here, I'm off. They are the most insufferably obtrusive and aggressive women I ever met; and I'd rather take boat and pass a month at the Hebrides than stop a week in the house with them."

"I think Sally thrashed you when you came home once for the holidays," said Mrs Trafford, laughing.

"No, Alice, it was Beck," broke in her sister. "She has a wonderful story of what she calls a left-hander, that she planted under his eye. She tells it still with great gusto, but owns that Mark fought on very bravely for two rounds after."

"And are these the people you expect me to show Maitland?" said Mark, rising from the table; "I'd rather, fifty times rather, write and say, We cannot receive you; our house is full, and will be for a month to come."

"Yes, dear Mark, that is the really sensible way to look at it. Nobody nowadays has any scruple in such matters. One is invited from Monday to Thursday, but on no possible pretext can he stay to Friday." And so Mrs Trafford ran away, heaping, by apparent consolations, coals of fire on his angry head.

“I think you had better get Alice to write the letter herself,” said Bella; “I’m sure she will do it with great tact and discretion.”

“Pray do,” added she. “Intrust me with the despatch, and I promise you the negotiation will be completed then and there.”

“It is quite bad enough to shut the door in a man’s face, without jeering at him out of the window,” said Mark, and he dashed out of the room in a rage.

“I wish he had shown us his friend’s note,” said Alice. “I’m quite certain that his anger has far more to do with that epistle than with any of our comments upon it.”

“I’m very sorry Mark should be annoyed,” said Bella; “but I’m selfish enough to own that, if we escape Mr Maitland’s visit, I shall deem the bargain a good one.”

“I suspect Mr Maitland does not intend to honour us by his company, and that we may spare ourselves all the embarrassment of preparing for it,” said Lady Lyle. And now the three ladies set themselves to consider in committee that oft-vexed problem of how to make a country-house hold more people than it had room for, and how to persuade the less distinguished of the guests that they are “taking

out" in cordiality all that their reception wants in convenience. One difficulty presented itself at every step, and in a variety of shapes. Never before had the Abbey been full of visitors without Tony Butler being there to assist in their amusement—Tony equally at home on land and on sea—the cavalier of young ladies—the safe coachman of mammas—the guide to all that was noteworthy—the fisherman—the yachtsman whom no weather disconcerted, no misadventure could provoke—so good-tempered and so safe; ay, so safe! for Tony never wanted to flirt with the young heiress, nor teach her schoolboy brother to smoke a short pipe. He had neither the ambition to push his fortune unfairly, nor to attach his junior to him by unworthy means. And the sisters ran over his merits, and grew very enthusiastic about traits in him, which, by inference, they implied were not the gifts of others nearer home.

"I wish, papa, you would ride over and see Mrs Butler, and ask when Tony is expected back again."

"Or if," added Mrs Trafford—"or if we could get him back by writing, and saying how much we want him."

"I know I'll never venture on Soliman till Tony has had a hand on him."

“And those chestnuts mamma wants for the low phaeton—who is to break them now?” cried Bella.

“I only heard yesterday,” said Sir Arthur, “that the Mermaid’s sails were all cut up. Tony was going to make a schooner of her, it seems; and there she is now, dismantled, and not one of us able to put her in commission again.”

“I declare it sounds absurd,” broke in Lady Lyle, “but I fancy the garden is beginning to look neglected already. Certainly I never saw Mr Graft there the whole morning; and he would not have dared to absent himself if Tony were here.”

“I’d go over willingly and see his mother,” said Sir Arthur; “but as Tony did not confide to us his intended journey, but set off without a word, it would have the appearance of a certain prying curiosity on my part were I to ask after him, and when he is expected home again.”

“Not if you were to say frankly that we wanted him, and couldn’t get on without him, papa,” said Alice. “I’d have no shame in saying that we are perfectly helpless without his skill, his courage, his ready wit, and his good nature.”

“Why not secure all those perfections beyond risk, Alice?” said Sir Arthur, laughing.

“ How so?—only tell me.”

“ Marry him.”

“ First of all, papa, he might not marry *me*; and, secondly, if he should, it might not be the way to insure the perpetuity I covet. You know what Swift says of the ‘promising’ Princes and the ‘bad’ Kings the world is full of?”

“ I protest,” said Lady Lyle, haughtily, “ I have a great regard for young Butler; but it has never gone the length of making me desire him for a son-in-law.”

“ Meanwhile, papa—for we have quite time enough to think over the marriage—pray, let me order them to saddle Peter for you, and ride over to the Burnside.”

“ Do so, Alice; I’m quite ready; but, first of all, give me my instructions.”

“ We want Tony,” broke in Bella.

“ Yes; and insist on having him. He must be here by Monday night or Tuesday morning, if it cost an express to go after him.”

“ We ought to bear in mind, girls, that Tony has not left home in pursuit of pleasure. The poor fellow has had some call of urgency or necessity, and our selfishness must not go the length of a cruelty.”

"But with your nice tact, papa, you'll find out all that ; you'll learn, in the course of conversation, whether anything of importance has called him away, or whether it be not, as I half suspect, a sort of passing caprice." And she looked significantly at Bella, and left her sentence unfinished.

"Do you know of anything that should induce you to believe this, Alice?"

"Nothing more than a chance word that dropped from Mark this morning. He took it into his head last night that poor Tony was presumptuous, and gave himself airs—Tony! of all creatures in the world ;—and so the great hussar, in the plenitude of his regimental experiences, essayed what he called 'to put him down !' Now, the chances are that this may have occasioned some unpleasantness, and it is not in the least unlikely may have led to Tony's departure."

"You must be right, Alice ; and since we have been standing here at the window, I saw Mrs Butler's herd give Mark a letter, which, after reading, he crushed impatiently in his hand and thrust into his pocket. This decides me at once. I will go down to Mrs Butler's without delay."

"Please explain that I have not called, solely because the carriage-road is so bad. The drive down

through that forest of fern and reeds is like a horrid nightmare on me," said Lady Lyle.

"Well, I think I can apologise for your absence without telling her that she lives in an unapproachable wilderness," said he, laughing; "and as she cares little for visiting or being visited, the chances are my task will be an easy one."

"Would you like me to go with you, papa?" asked Alice.

"Yes, by all means; but stay," added he quickly, "it might possibly be better not to come; if anything unpleasant should have occurred between Mark and Tony, she will have less reluctance to speak of it when we are alone."

They all agreed that this was well thought of, and soon after saw him set out on his mission, their best wishes for his success following him.

Sir Arthur pondered as he went over what he should say, and how he would meet the remarks he deemed it likely she would make to him. Without being in the least what is called a person of superior abilities, Mrs Butler was a somewhat hard-headed woman, whose north of Ireland caution and shrewdness stood her in stead for higher qualities; and if they would not have guided her in great difficulties, she had the good fortune or the prudence to escape

from such. He knew this; and he knew besides that there pertains to a position of diminished means and station a peculiar species of touchy pride, always suggesting to its possessor the suspicion that this or that liberty would never have been taken in happier days, and thus to regard the most well-meant counsels and delicately conveyed advice as uncalled-for interference, or worse.

It was after much consideration he saw himself at the little wicket of the garden, where he dismounted, and, fastening his bridle to the gate, knocked at the door. Though he could distinctly hear the sound of voices within, and the quick movement of feet, his summons was unanswered, and he was about to repeat it for the third time when the door was opened.

“Is your mistress at home, Jeanie?” said he, recognising with a smile the girl’s curtsy to him.

“Yes, sir, she’s at home,” was the dry answer.

“Will you just tell her, then, that Sir Arthur Lyle would take it as a great favour if she’d permit him to speak to her.”

The girl disappeared with the message, but did not return again for several minutes; and when she did, she looked slightly agitated. “My mistress is very sorry, sir, but she canna see ye the day; it’s a sort of a headache she has.”

"Mr Anthony, is he at home?" asked he, curious to remark the effect of his question.

"He's no just at hame the noo," was the cautious reply.

"He has not been up at the Abbey to-day," said he, carelessly; "but, to be sure, I came through the 'brocken,' and might have missed him."

A little dry nod of the head, to acknowledge that this or anything else was possible, was all that his speech elicited.

"Say that I was very sorry, Jeanie, that Mrs Butler could not see me, and sorrier for the reason; but that I hope to-morrow or next day to be more fortunate. Not," added he, after a second thought, "that what I wanted to speak of is important, except to myself; don't forget this, Jeanie."

"I winna forget," said she, and, curtsying again, closed the door. Sir Arthur rode slowly back to report that his embassy had failed.

C H A P T E R I V.

SOME NEW ARRIVALS.

DAY after day went over, and no tidings of Maitland. When the post came in of a morning, and no letter in his hand appeared, Mark's impatience was too perceptible to make any comment for his sisters either safe or prudent. Nor was it till nigh a week passed over that he himself said, "I wonder what has become of Maitland? I hope he's not ill." None followed up the theme, and it dropped. The expected guests began to drop in soon after, and, except by Mark himself, Mr Norman Maitland was totally forgotten. The visitors were for the most part squires and their wives and families; solid, well-to-do gentlemen, whose chief objects in life were green crops and the poor-law. Their talk was either of mangold or guano, swedes or the union, just as their sons' conversation ranged over dogs, horses, meets, and covers; and the ladies disported

in toilette, and such details of the Castle drawing-rooms as the Dublin papers afforded. There were Mr and Mrs Warren, with two daughters and a son ; and the Hunters, with two sons and a daughter. There were Colonel Hoyle and Mrs Hoyle, from regimental headquarters, Belfast ; and Groves Bulkney, the member for the county, who had come over, in the fear of an approaching dissolution of Parliament, to have a look at his constituents. He was a Tory, who always voted with the Whigs, a sort of politician in great favour with the north of Ireland, and usually supposed to have much influence with both parties. There were Masseys from Tipperary, and M'Clintocks from Louth ; and, lastly, herald of their approach, three large coffin-shaped trunks, undeniably of sea-origin, with the words "Cap. Gambier Graham, R.N." marked on them, which arrived by a carrier, with three gun-cases and an immense array of fishing-tackle, gaffs, and nets.

"So I see those odious Grahams are coming," said Mark, ill-humouredly, as he met his elder sister in the hall. "I declare, if it were not that Maitland might chance to arrive in my absence, I'd set off this very morning."

"I assure you, Mark, you are all wrong; the

girls are no favourites of mine; but looking to the staple of our other guests, the Grahams are perfect boons from heaven. The Warrens, with their infant school; and Mrs Maxwell, with her quarrel with the bishop; and the Masseys, with their pretension about that daughter who married Lord Claude Somebody, are so terribly tiresome, that I long for the racket and noise of those bustling young women, who will at least dispel our dulness."

"At the cost of our good breeding."

"At all events they are jolly and good-tempered girls. We have known them for—"

"Oh, don't say how long. The younger one is two years older than myself."

"No, Mark; Beck is exactly your own age."

"Then I'm determined to call myself five-and-thirty the first opportunity I have. She shall have three years tacked to her for the coming into the world along with me."

"Sally is only thirty-four."

"Only! the idea of saying *only* to thirty-four."

"They don't look within eight or nine years of it, I declare. I suppose you will scarcely detect the slightest change in them."

"So much the worse. Any change would improve them in my eyes."

“And the Captain too. He, I believe, is now Commodore.”

“I perceive there is no change in the mode of travel,” said Mark, pointing to the trunks. “The heavy luggage used always to arrive the day before they drove up in their vile Irish jaunting-car. Do they still come in that fashion?”

“Yes; and I really believe with the same horse they had long, long ago.”

“A flea-bitten mare, with a twisted tail?”

“The very same,” cried she, laughing. “I’ll certainly tell Beck how well you remember their horse. She’ll take it as a flattery.”

“Tell her what you like—she’ll soon find out how much flattery she has to expect from *me!*” After a short pause, in which he made two ineffectual attempts to light a cigar, and slightly burned his fingers, he said, “I’d not for a hundred pounds that Maitland had met them here. With simply stupid country gentry, he’d not care to notice their ways nor pay attention to their humdrum habits; but these Grahams, with all their flagrant vulgarity, will be a temptation too irresistible, and he will leave this to associate us for ever in his mind with the two most ill-bred women in creation.”

“You are quite unfair, Mark; they are greatly liked—at least, people are glad to have them; and if we only had poor Tony Butler here, who used to manage them to perfection, they’d help us wonderfully with all the dulness around us.”

“Thank heaven we have not. I’d certainly not face such a constellation as the three of them. I tell you frankly, that I’d pack my portmanteau and go over to Scotland if that fellow were to come here again.”

“You’re not likely to be driven to such an extremity, I suspect; but here comes papa, and I think he has been down at the Burnside; let us hear what news he has.”

“It has no interest for *me*,” said he, walking away, while she hastened out to meet Sir Arthur.

“No tidings, Alice—at least none that I can learn. Mrs Butler’s headache still prevents her seeing me, though I could wager I saw her at work in the garden when I turned off the high-road.”

“How strange! You suspect that she avoids you?”

“I am certain of it; and I went round by the minister’s, thinking to have a talk with Stewart, and hear something that might explain this; but

he was engaged in preparing his sermon, and begged me to excuse him."

"I wish we could get to the bottom of this mystery. Would she receive *me*, do you think, if I were to go over to the cottage?"

"Most likely not. I suspect whatever it be that has led to this estrangement will be a passing cloud; let us wait and see. Who are those coming up the bend of the road? The horse looks fagged enough, certainly."

"The Grahams, I declare! Oh, I must find Mark, and let him be caught here when they arrive."

"Don't let the Commodore get at *me* before dinner, that's all I ask," said Sir Arthur, as he rode round to the stables.

When Alice entered the house, she found Mark at the open window watching with an opera-glass the progress of the jaunting-car as it slowly wound along the turns of the approach, lost and seen as the woods intervened or opened.

"I cannot make it out at all, Alice," said he; "there are two men and two women, as well as I can see, besides the driver."

"No, no; they have their maid, whom you mistake for a man."

“Then the maid wears a wideawake and a paletot. Look and see for yourself,” and he handed her the glass.

“I declare you are right—it is a man; he is beside Beck. Sally is on the side with her father.”

“Are they capable of bringing some one along with them?” cried he in horror. “Do you think they would dare to take such a liberty as that here?”

“I’m certain they would not. It must be Kenrose the apothecary, who was coming to see one of the maids, or one of our own people, or——” Her further conjectures were cut short by the outburst of so strong an expletive as cannot be repeated; and Mark, pale as death, stammered out, “It’s Maitland! Norman Maitland!”

“But how, Mark, do they know him?”

“Confound them! who can tell how it happened?” said he. “I’ll not meet him—I’ll leave the house—I’ll not face such an indignity.”

“But remember, Mark, none of us know your friend; we have not so much as seen him; and as he was to meet these people, it’s all the better they came as acquaintances.”

“That’s all very fine,” said he, angrily; “you can be beautifully philosophical about it, all because

you haven't to go back to a mess-table and be badgered by all sorts of allusions and references to Maitland's capital story."

"Here they are, here they are!" cried Alice, and the next moment she was warmly embracing those dear friends to whose failings she was nowise blind, however ardent her late defence of them. Mark, meanwhile, had advanced towards Maitland, and gave him as cordial a welcome as he could command. "My sister Mrs Trafford—Mr Maitland," said he, and Alice gave her hand with a graceful cordiality to the new guest.

"I declare Mark is afraid that I'll kiss him," cried Beck. "Courage, *mon ami*, I'll not expose you in public."

"How are you? how are you?" cried the Commodore; "brown, brown, very brown; Indian sun. Lucky if the mischief is only skin-deep."

"Shake hands, Mark," said Sally, in a deep masculine voice; "don't bear malice though I did pitch you out of the boat that day."

Mark was, however, happily, too much engaged with his friend to have heard the speech. He was eagerly listening to Maitland's account of his first meeting with the Grahams.

"My lucky star was in the ascendant, for there

I stood," said Maitland, "in the great square of Bally—Bally—"

"Ballymena," broke in Beck; "and there's no great square in the place; but you stood in a very dirty stable-yard, in a much greater passion than such a fine gentleman should ever give way to."

"Calling, 'A horse! a horse! My kingdom for a horse!'"

"It was 'a chaise and pair' *I* heard, and you were well laughed at for your demand. The baker offered you a seat, which you rejected with dismay; and, to tell the truth, it was half in the hope of witnessing another outburst of your indignation that I went across and said, 'Would you accept a place beside me, sir?'"

"And was I not overwhelmed with joy—was it not in a transport of gratitude that I embraced your offer?"

"I know you very nearly embraced my maid as you lifted her off the car."

"And, by the way, where is Patience?" asked Mrs Trafford.

"She's coming on, some fashion, with the swell's luggage," added she, dropping her voice to a whisper—"eight trunks, eleven carpet-bags, and four

dressing-boxes, besides what I thought was a show-box, but is only a shower-bath."

"My people will take every care of her," said Maitland.

"Is Fenton still with you?" asked Mark.

"Yes; he had some thoughts of leaving me lately; he said he thought he'd like to retire—that he'd take a consulate or a barrackmastership—but I laughed him out of it."

Sir Arthur and Lady Lyle had now come down to welcome the new arrivals; and greetings and welcomes and felicitations resounded on all sides.

"Come along with me, Maitland," said Mark, hurrying his friend away. "Let me show you your quarters;" and as he moved off he added, "What a piece of ill-luck it was that you should have chanced upon the greatest bores of our acquaintance!—people so detestable to me, that if I hadn't been expecting your visit I'd have left the house this morning."

"I don't know that," said Maitland, half languidly; "perhaps I have grown more tolerant, or more indifferent—what may be another name for the same thing—but I rather liked the young women. Have we any more stairs to mount?"

"No; here you are;" and Mark reddened a little

at the impertinent question. "I have put you here, because this was an old *garçon* apartment I had arranged for myself; and you have your bath-room yonder, and your servant, on the other side of the terrace."

"It's all very nice, and seems very quiet," said Maitland.

"As to that, you'll not have to complain: except the splash of the sea at the foot of those cliffs, you'll never hear a sound here."

"It's a bold thing of you to make me so comfortable, Lyle. When I wrote to you to say I was coming, my head was full of what we call country-house life, with all its bustle and racket—noisy breakfasts and noisier luncheons, with dinners as numerous as *tables d'hôte*. I never dreamed of such a paradise as this. May I dine here all alone when in the humour?"

"You are to be all your own master, and to do exactly as you please. I need not say, though, that I will scarce forgive you if you grudge us your company."

"I'm not always up to society. I'm growing a little footsore with the world, Lyle, and like to lie down in the shade."

"Lewis told me you were writing a book—a novel, I think he said," said Mark.

“I write a book! I never thought of such a thing. Why, my dear Lyle, the fellows who—like myself—know the whole thing, never write! Haven’t you often remarked that a man who has passed years of life in a foreign city loses all power of depicting its traits of peculiarity, just because, from habit, they have ceased to strike him as strange? So it is. Your thorough man of the world knows life too well to describe it. No, no; it is the creature that stands furtively in the flats that can depict what goes on in the comedy. Who are your guests?”

Mark ran over the names carelessly.

“All new to me, and I to them. Don’t introduce me, Mark; leave me to shake down in any bivouac that may offer. I’ll not be a bear if people don’t bait me. You understand?”

“Perhaps I do.”

“There are no foreigners? that’s a loss. They season society though they never make it, and there’s an evasive softness in French that contributes much to the courtesies of life. So it is—the habits of the Continent to the wearied man of the world are just like loose slippers to a gouty man. People learn to be intimate there without being over familiar—a great point, Mark.”

"By the way—talking of that same familiarity—there was a young fellow who got the habit of coming here, before I returned from India, on such easy terms, that I found him installed like one of ourselves. He had his room, his saddle-horse, a servant that waited on him, and who did his orders, as if he were a son of the family. I cut the thing very short when I came home, by giving him a message to do some trifling service, just as I would have told my valet. He resented, left the house, and sent me this letter next morning."

"Not much given to letter-writing, I see," muttered Maitland, as he read over Tony's epistle; "but still the thing is reasonably well put, and means to say, Give me a chance, and I'm ready for you. What's the name? Buller?"

"No; Butler—Tony Butler they call him here."

"What Butlers does he belong to?" asked Maitland, with more interest in his manner.

"No Butlers at all—at least none of any standing. My sisters, who swear by this fellow, will tell you that his father was a colonel and C.B., and I don't know what else; and that his uncle was, and I believe is, a certain Sir Omerod Butler, minister or ex-minister somewhere; but I have my doubts of all the fine parentage, seeing

that this youth lives with his mother in a cottage here that stands in the rent-roll at £18 per annum."

"There is a Sir Omerod Butler," said Maitland, with a slow, thoughtful enunciation.

"But, if he be this youth's uncle, he never knows nor recognises him. My sister, Mrs Trafford, has the whole story of these people, and will be charmed to tell it to you."

"I have no curiosity in the matter," said Maitland, languidly. "The world is really so very small, that by the time a man reaches my age, he knows every one that is to be known in it. And so," said he, as he looked again at the letter, "he went off, after sending you the letter?"

"Yes, he left this the same day."

"And where for?"

"I never asked. The girls, I suppose, know all about his movements. I overhear mutterings about poor Tony at every turn. Tell me, Maitland," added he, with more earnestness, "is this letter a thing I can notice? Is it not a regular provocation?"

"It is, and it is not," said Maitland, as he lighted a cigar, puffing the smoke leisurely between his words. "If he were a man that you would chance upon at every moment, meet at your club,

or sit opposite at dinner, the thing would fester into a sore in its own time; but here is a fellow, it may be, that you'll never see again, or if so, but on distant terms: I'd say, put the document with your tailor's bills, and think no more of it."

Lyle nodded an assent and was silent.

"I say, Lyle," added Maitland, after a moment, "I'd advise you never to speak of the fellow—never discuss him. If your sisters bring up his name, let it drop unnoticed; it is the only way to put the tombstone on such memories. What is your dinner-hour here?"

"Late enough, even for you—eight."

"That *is* civilised. I'll come down—at least to-day," said he, after a brief pause; "and now leave me."

When Lyle withdrew, Maitland leaned on the window-sill, and ranged his eyes over the bold coast-line beneath him. It was not, however, to admire the bold promontory of Fairhead, or the sweeping shore that shelved at its base; nor was it to gaze on the rugged outline of those perilous rocks which stretched from the Causeway far into the open sea;—his mind was far far away from the spot, deep in cares and wiles and schemes, for his was an intriguing head, and had its own store of knaveries.

CHAPTER V.

IN LONDON.

SEEKING one's fortune is a very gambling sort of affair. It is leaving so much to chance—trusting so implicitly to what is called "luck," that it makes all individual exertion a merely secondary process—a kind of "auxiliary screw" to aid the gale of Fortune. It was pretty much in this spirit that Tony Butler arrived in London, nor did the aspect of that mighty sea of humanity serve to increase his sense of self-reliance. It was not merely his loneliness that he felt in that great crowd, but it was his utter inutility—his actual worthlessness—to all others. If the gamester's sentiment, to try his luck, was in his heart, it was the spirit of a very poor gambler, who had but one "throw" to risk on fortune; and thus thinking he set out for Downing Street.

If he was somewhat disappointed in the tumble-

down ruinous old mass of building which held the state secrets of the empire, he was not the less awe-struck as he found himself at the threshold where the great men who guide empires were accustomed to pass in. With a bold effort he swung back the glass door of the inner hall, and found himself in presence of a very well-whiskered, imposing-looking man, who, seated indolently in a deep arm-chair, was busily engaged in reading the 'Times.' A glance over the top of the paper was sufficient to assure this great official that it was not necessary to interrupt his perusal of the news on the stranger's account, and so he read on undisturbed.

"I have a letter here for Sir Harry Elphinstone," began Tony; "can I deliver it to him?"

"You can leave it in that rack yonder," said the other, pointing to a glass-case attached to the wall.

"But I wish to give it myself—with my own hand."

"Sir Harry comes down to the office at five, and, if your name is down for an audience, will see you after six."

"And if it is not down?"

"He won't see you, that's all." There was an

impatience about the last words that implied he had lost his place in the newspaper, and wished to be rid of his interrogator.

“And if I leave my letter here, when shall I call for the answer?” asked Tony, diffidently.

“Any time from this to this day six weeks,” said the other, with a wave of the hand to imply the audience was ended.

“What if I were to try his private residence?” said Tony.

“Eighty-one Park Lane,” said the other aloud, while he mumbled over to himself the last line he had read, to recall his thoughts to the passage.

“You advise me then to go there?”

“Always cutting down, always slicing off something!” muttered the other, with his eyes on the paper. “‘For the port-collector of Hallihololulo, three hundred and twenty pounds. Mr Scrudge moved as amendment that the vote be reduced by the sum of seventy-four pounds eighteen and seven-pence, being the amount of the collector’s salary for the period of his absence from his post during the prevalence of the yellow fever on the coast. The honourable member knew a gentleman, whose name he was unwilling to mention publicly, but would have much pleasure in communicating con-

fidentially to any honourable gentleman on either side of the House, who had passed several days at Haccamana, and never was attacked by any form of yellow fever.' That was a home-thrust, eh?" cried the reader, addressing Tony. "Not such an easy thing to answer old Scrudge there?"

"I'm a poor opinion on such matters," said Tony, with humility; "but pray tell me, if I were to call at Park Lane——"

The remainder of his question was interrupted by the sudden start to his legs of the austere porter, as an effeminate-looking young man, with his hat set on one side, and a glass to his eye, swung wide the door, and walked up to the letter-rack.

"Only these, Willis?" said he, taking some half-dozen letters of various sizes.

"And this, sir," said the porter, handing him Tony's letter; "but the young man thinks he'd like to have it back;" while he added, in a low but very significant tone—"He's going to Park Lane with it himself."

The young gentleman turned round at this, and took a very leisurely survey of the man who contemplated a step of such rare audacity.

"He's from Ireland, Mr Damer," whispered the

porter, with a half-kindly impulse to make an apology for such ignorance.

Mr Damer smiled faintly, and gave a little nod, as though to say that the explanation was sufficient; and again turned towards Tony.

“I take it that you know Sir Harry Elphinstone?” asked he.

“I never saw him; but he knew my father very well, and he’ll remember my name.”

“Knew your father! And in what capacity, may I ask?”

“In what capacity!” repeated Tony, almost fiercely.

“Yes; I mean, as what—on what relations did they stand to each other?”

“As schoolfellows at Westminster, where he fagged to my father; in the Grenadier Guards afterwards, where they served together; and, last of all, as correspondents, which they were for many years.”

“Ah, yes,” sighed the other, as though he had read the whole story, and a very painful story too, of change of fortune and ruined condition. “But still,” continued he, “I’d scarcely advise your going to Park Lane. He don’t like it. None of them like it!”

“Don’t they?” said Tony, not even vaguely

guessing at whose prejudices he was hinting, but feeling bound to say something.

"No, they don't," rejoined Mr Damer, in a half-confidential way. "There is such a deal of it—fellows who were in the same 'eleven' at Oxford, or widows of tutors, or parties who wrote books—I think they are the worst, but all are bores, immense bores! You want to get something, don't you?"

Tony smiled, as much at the oddity of the question, as in acquiescence.

"I ask," said the other, "because you'll have to come to me; I'm private secretary, and I give away nearly all the office patronage. Come up-stairs;" and with this he led the way up a very dirty staircase to a still dirtier corridor, off which a variety of offices opened, the open doors of which displayed the officials in all forms and attitudes of idleness—some asleep, some reading newspapers, some at luncheon—and two were sparring with boxing-gloves.

"Sir Harry writes the whole night through," said Mr Damer, "that's the reason these fellows have their own time of it now;" and with this bit of apology he ushered Tony into a small but comfortably-furnished room, with a great coal-fire in the grate, though the day was a sultry one in autumn.

Mr Skeffington Damer's first care was to present himself before a looking-glass, and arrange his hair, his whiskers, and his cravat ; having done which he told Tony to be seated, and threw himself into a most comfortably padded arm-chair, with a writing-desk appended to one side of it.

"I may as well open your letter. It's not marked private, eh ?"

"Not marked private," said Tony, "but its contents are strictly confidential."

"But it will be in the waste-paper basket to-morrow morning, for all that," said Damer, with a pitying compassion for the other's innocence. "What is it you are looking for—what sort of thing ?"

"I scarcely know, because I'm fit for so little ; they tell me the colonies, Australia or New Zealand, are the places for fellows like me."

"Don't believe a word of it," cried Damer, energetically. "A man with any 'go' in him can do fifty thousand times better at home. You go some thousand miles away—for what ? to crush quartz, or hammer limestone, or pump water, or carry mud in baskets, at a dollar, two dollars, five dollars, if you like, a-day, in a country where Dillon, one of our fellows that's under-secretary there, writes me word he paid thirty shillings for a pot of Yarmouth

bloater. It's a rank humbug all that about the colonies—take my word for it!"

"But what is there to be done at home, at least by one like *me*?"

"Scores of things: go on the Exchange—go in for a rise, go in for a fall. Take Peruvian Twelves—they're splendid—or Montezuman mining scrip. I did a little in Guatimalas last week, and I expect a capital return by next settling-day. If you think all this too gambling, get named Director of a company. There's the patent phosphorus blacking, will give fifty pounds for a respectable chairman; or write a novel, that's the easiest thing in life, and pays wonderfully,—Herd and Dashen give a thousand down, and double the money for each edition; and it's a fellow's own fault if it ain't a success. Then there's patent medicine and scene-painting—any one can paint a scene, all done with a great brush—this fashion; and you get up to fifteen, ay, twenty pounds a-week. By the way, are you active?"

"Tolerably so. Why do you ask?" said Tony, smiling at the impetuous incoherence of the other's talk.

"Just hold up this newspaper—so—not so high—there. Don't move; a very little to the right." So saying, Mr Damer took three sofa-cushions, and

placed them in a line on the floor ; and then, taking off his coat and waistcoat, retired to a distant corner of the room. " Be steady, now ; don't move," cried he ; and then, with a brisk run, he dashed forward, and leaped head-foremost through the extended newspaper, but with so vigorous a spring as to alight on the floor a considerable distance in advance of the cushions, so that he arose with a bump on his forehead, and his nose bleeding.

" Admirably done ! splendidly done !" cried Tony, anxious to cover the disaster by a well-timed applause.

" I never got so much as a scratch before," said Damer, as he proceeded to sponge his face. " I've done the clock and the coach-window at the Adelphi, and they all thought it was Salter. I could have five pounds a-night and a free benefit. Is it growing black around the eye ? I hope it's not growing black around the eye ? "

" Let me bathe it for you. By the way, have you any one here could manage to get you a little newly-baked dough ? That's the boxers' remedy for a bruise. If I knew where to go, I'd fetch it myself."

Damer looked up from his bathing proceedings, and stared at the good-natured readiness of one so

willing to oblige as not to think of the ridicule that might attach to his kindness. "My servant will go for it," said he; "just pull that bell, will you, and I'll send him. Is not it strange how I could have done this?" continued he, still bent on explaining away his failure; "what a nose I shall have to-morrow! Eh, what's that? It's Sir Harry's bell ringing away furiously! Was there ever the like of this! The only day he should have come for the last eight months!" The bell now continued to ring violently, and Damer had nothing for it but to huddle on his coat, and rush away to answer the summons.

Though not more than ten minutes absent, Tony thought the time very long; in reality, he felt anxious about the poor fellow, and eager to know that his disaster had not led to disgrace.

"Never so much as noticed it," said Damer—"was so full of other matters. I suspect," added he, in a lower tone—"I suspect we are going out."

"Out where?" asked Tony, with simplicity.

"Out of office, out of power," replied the other, half-testily; then added, in a more conciliatory voice, "I'll tell you why I think so. He began filling up all the things that are vacant. I have just named two colonial secretaries, a chief-justice,

an auditor-general, and an inspector of convicts. I thought of that for *you*, and handed him your letter; but before he broke the seal he had filled up the place."

"So, then, he has read the letter?"

"Yes, he read it twice; and when I told him you were here in waiting, he said, 'Tell him not to go; I'll see him.'"

The thought of presenting himself bodily before the great man made Tony feel nervous and uncomfortable: and, after a few moments of fidgety uneasiness, he said—"What sort of person is he? what is he like?"

"Well," said Damer, who now stood over a basin, sponging his eye with cold water, "he's shy—very shy—but you'd never guess it; for he has a bold abrupt sort of way with him; and he constantly answers his own questions, and if the replies displease him, he grows irritable. You've seen men like that?"

"I cannot say that I have."

"Then it's downright impossible to say when he's in good humour with one, for he'll stop short in a laugh and give you such a pull up!"

"That is dreadful!" exclaimed Tony.

"*I* can manage him! They say in the office I'm

the only fellow that ever could manage him. There goes his bell—that's for you; wait here, however, till I come back."

Damer hurried away, but was back in a moment, and beckoned to Tony to follow him, which he did in a state of flurry and anxiety that a real peril would never have caused him.

Tony found himself standing in the minister's presence, where he remained for full a couple of minutes before the great man lifted his head and ceased writing. "Sit down," was the first salutation; and as he took a chair, he had time to remark the stern but handsome features of a large man somewhat past the prime of life, and showing in the lines of his face traces of dissipation as well as of labour.

"Are you the son of Watty Butler?" asked he, as he wheeled his chair from the table and confronted Tony.

"My father's name was Walter, sir," replied Tony, not altogether without resenting this tone of alluding to him.

"Walter! nothing of the kind; nobody ever called him anything but Watty, or Wat Tartar, in the regiment. Poor Watty! you are very like him—not so large—not so tall."

“The same height to a hair, sir.”

“Don’t tell me; Watty was an inch and half over you, and much broader in the chest. I think I ought to know; he has thrown me scores of times, wrestling, and I suspect it would puzzle *you* to do it.”

Tony’s face flushed; he made no answer, but in his heart of hearts he’d like to have had a trial.

Perhaps the great man expected some confirmation of his opinion, or perhaps he had his own doubts about its soundness; but whatever the reason, his voice was more peevish as he said, “I have read your mother’s note, but for the life of me I cannot see what it points to. What has become of your father’s fortune? he had something, surely.”

“Yes, sir, he had a younger son’s portion, but he risked it in a speculation—some mines in Canada—and lost it.”

“Ay, and ‘dipped’ it too by extravagance! There’s no need to tell me how he lived; there wasn’t so wasteful a fellow in the regiment; he’d have exactly what he pleased, and spend how he liked. And what has it come to? ay, that’s what I ask—what has it come to? His wife comes here with this petition—for it is a petition—asking—I’ll be shot if I know what she asks.”

"Then I'll tell you," burst in Tony; "she asks the old brother-officer of her husband—the man who in his letters called himself his brother—to befriend his son, and there's nothing like a petition in the whole of it."

"What! what! what! This is something I'm not accustomed to! You want to make friends, young man, and you must not begin by outraging the very few who might chance to be well disposed towards you."

Tony stood abashed and overwhelmed, his cheeks on fire with shame, but he never uttered a word.

"I have very little patronage," said Sir Harry, drawing himself up and speaking in a cold, measured tone; "the colonies appoint their own officials, with a very few exceptions. I could make you a Bishop or an Attorney-General, but I couldn't make you a Tide-waiter! What can you do? Do you write a good hand?"

"No, sir; it is legible, that's all."

"And, of course, you know nothing of French or German?"

"A little French; not a word of German, sir."

"I'd be surprised if you did. It is always when a fellow has utterly neglected his education that he comes to a government for a place. The belief

apparently is, that the State supports a large institution of incapables, eh?"

"Perhaps there is that impression abroad," said Tony, defiantly.

"Well, sir, the impression, as you phrase it, is unfounded, I can affirm. I have already declared it in the House, that there is not a government in Europe more ably, more honestly, or more zealously served than our own. We may not have the spirit of discipline of the French, or the bureaucracy of the Prussian; but we have a class of officials proud of the departments they administer; and, let me tell you—it's no small matter—very keen after retiring pensions."

Either Sir Harry thought he had said a smart thing, or that the theme suggested something that tickled his fancy, for he smiled pleasantly now on Tony, and looked far better tempered than before. Indeed, Tony laughed at the abrupt peroration, and that laugh did him no disservice.

"Well, now, Butler, what are we to do with you?" resumed the minister, good-humouredly. "It's not easy to find the right thing, but I'll talk it over with Damer. Give him your address, and drop in upon him occasionally—not too often, but now and then, so that he shouldn't forget you.

Meanwhile, brush up your French and Italian. I'm glad you know Italian."

"But I do not, sir; not a syllable of the language."

"Oh, it was German, then; don't interrupt me. Indeed let me take the occasion to impress upon you that you have this great fault of manners—a fault, I have remarked, prevalent among Irishmen, and which renders them excessively troublesome in the House, and brings them frequently under the reproof of the Speaker. If you read the newspapers you will have seen this yourself."

Second to a censure of himself, the severest thing for poor Tony to endure was any sneer at his countrymen; but he made a great effort to remain patient, and did not utter a word.

"Mind," resumed the minister, "don't misunderstand me. I do not say that your countrymen are deficient in quickness and a certain ready-witted way of meeting emergencies. Yes, they have that as well as some other qualities of the same order, but these things won't make statesmen. This was an old battle-ground between your father and myself thirty years ago. Strange to think I should have to fight over the same question with his son now."

Tony did not exactly perceive what was his share in the conflict, but he still kept silence.

“Your father was a clever fellow, too, and he had a brother—a much cleverer, by the way: there’s the man to serve you—Sir Omerod Butler. He’s alive, I know, for I saw his pension certificate not a week ago. Have you written to him?”

“No, sir. My father and my uncle were not on speaking terms for years, and it is not likely I would appeal to Sir Omerod for assistance.”

“The quarrel, or coolness, or whatever it was, might have been the fault of your father.”

“No, sir, it was not.”

“Well, with that I have no concern. All that I know is, your uncle is a man of a certain influence—at least with his own party—which is not ours. He is, besides, rich; an old bachelor, too, if I’m not mistaken; and so, it might be worth the while of a young fellow who has his way to make in life, to compromise a little of his family pride.”

“I don’t think so; I won’t do it,” broke in Tony, hotly. “If you have no other counsel to give me than one you never would have given to my father, all I have to say is, I wish I had spared myself the trouble, and my poor mother the cost, of this journey.”

If the great man's wrath was moved by the insolent boldness of the first part of this speech, the vibrating voice and the emotion that accompanied the last words touched him, and, going over to where the young man stood, he laid his hand kindly on his shoulder, and said, " You'll have to keep this warm temper of yours in more subjection, Butler, if you want to get on in life. The advice I gave you was very worldly, perhaps ; but when you live to be my age, such will be the temper in which you'll come to consider most things. And, after all," said he, with a smile, " you're only the more like you're father for it ! Go away, now ; look up your decimals, your school classics, and suchlike, to be ready for the Civil Service people, and come back here in a week or so—let Damer know where to find you," were the last words, as Tony retired and left the room.

" Well, what success ?" cried Damer, as Tony entered his room.

" I can scarcely tell you, but this is what took place ;" and he recounted, as well as memory would serve him, all that had happened.

" Then it's all right—you are quite safe," said Damer.

" I don't see that, particularly as there remains this examination."

“Humbug—nothing but humbug! They only pluck the ‘swells,’ the fellows who have taken a double-first at Oxford. No, no; you’re as safe as a church; you’ll get—let me see what it will be—you’ll get the Postmastership of the Bahamas; or be Deputy Coal-meter at St Helena; or who knows if he’ll not give you that thing he exchanged for t’other day with F. O. It’s a Consul’s place, at Trincolopolis. It was Cole of the Blues had it, and he died; and there are four widows of his now claiming the pension. Yes, that’s where you’ll go, rely on’t. There’s the bell again. Write your address large, very large, on that sheet of paper, and I’ll send you word when there’s anything up.”

CHAPTER VI.

DOLLY STEWART.

TONY's first care, when he got back to his hotel, was to write to his mother. He knew how great her impatience would be to hear of him, and it was a sort of comfort to himself, in his loneliness, to sit down and pour out his hopes and his anxieties before one who loved him. He told her of his meeting with the minister, and by way of encouragement mentioned what Damer had pronounced upon that event. Nor did he forget to say how grateful he felt to Damer, who, "after all, with his fine-gentleman airs and graces, might readily have turned a cold shoulder to a rough-looking fellow like me."

Poor Tony! in his friendlessness he was very grateful for very little. Nor is there anything which is more characteristic of destitution than this sentiment. It is as with the schoolboy, who deems himself rich with a half-crown!

Tony would have liked much to make some inquiry about the family at the Abbey ; whether any one had come to ask after or look for him ; whether Mrs Trafford had sent down any books for his mother's reading, or any fresh flowers—the only present which the widow could be persuaded to accept ; but he was afraid to touch on a theme that had so many painful memories to himself. Ah, what happy days he had passed there ! what a bright dream it all appeared now to look back on ! The long rides along the shore, with Alice for his companion, more free to talk with him, less reserved than Isabella ; and who could, on the pretext of her own experiences of life—she was a widow of two-and-twenty—caution him against so many pitfalls, and guard him against so many deceits of the world. It was in this same quality of widow, too, that she could go out to sail with him alone, making long excursions along the coast, diving into bays, and landing on strange islands, giving them curious names as they went, and fancying that they were new voyagers on unknown seas.

Were such days ever to come back again ? No, he knew they could not. They never do come back, even to the luckiest of us ; and how far less would be our enjoyment of them if we but knew that each

fleeting moment could never be reacted ! " I wonder, is Alice lonely ? Does she miss me ? Isabella will not care so much. She has books and her drawing, and she is so self-dependent ; but Alice, whose cry was, ' Where's Tony ? ' till it became a jest against her in the house. Oh, if she but knew how I envy the dog that lies at her feet, and that can look up into her soft blue eyes, and wonder what she is thinking of ! Well, Alice, it has come at last. Here is the day you so long predicted. I have set out to seek my fortune, but where is the high heart and the bold spirit you promised me ? I have no doubt," cried he, as he paced his room impatiently, " there are plenty who would say, it is the life of luxurious indolence and splendour that I am sorrowing after—that it is to be a fancied great man—to have horses to ride, and servants to wait on me, and my every wish gratified,—it is all this I am regretting. But *I* know better ! I'd be as poor as ever I was, and consent never to be better, if she'd just let me see her, and be with her, and love her, to my own heart, without ever telling her. And now the day has come that makes all these bygones ! "

It was with a choking feeling in his throat almost hysterical that he went down-stairs and into the

street to try and walk off his gloomy humour. The great city was now before him—a very wide and a very noisy world—with abundance to interest and attract him, had his mind been less intent on his own future fortunes ; but he felt that every hour he was away from his poor mother was a pang, and every shilling he should spend would be a privation to her. Heaven only could tell by what thrift and care and time she had laid by the few pounds he had carried away to pay his journey! As his eye fell upon the tempting objects of the shop-windows, every moment displaying something he would have liked to have brought back to her—that nice warm shawl—that pretty clock for her mantelpiece—that little vase for her flowers ; how he despised himself for his poverty, and how meanly he thought of a condition that made him a burden where he ought to have been a benefit. Nor was the thought the less bitter that it reminded him of the wide space that separated him from her he had dared to love! “It comes to this,” cried he bitterly to himself, “that I have no right to be here ; no right to do anything, or think of anything that I have done. Of the thousands that pass me, there is not, perhaps, one the world has not more need of than of me ! Is there even one of all this mighty million that would

have a kind word for me, if they knew the heavy heart that was weighing me down?" At this minute he suddenly thought of Dolly Stewart, the Doctor's daughter, whose address he had carefully taken down from his mother, at Mr Alexander M'Gruder's, 4 Inverness Terrace, Richmond.

It would be a real pleasure to see Dolly's good-humoured face, and hear her merry voice, instead of those heavy looks and busy faces that addled and confused him; and so, as much to fill up his time as to spare his purse, he set out to walk to Richmond.

With whatever gloom and depression he began his journey, his spirits rose as he gained the outskirts of the town, and rose higher and higher as he felt the cheering breezes and the perfumed air that swept over the rich meadows at either side of him. It was, besides, such a luxuriant aspect of country as he had never before seen nor imagined—fields cultivated like gardens, trim hedgerows, ornamental trees, picturesque villas on every hand. How beautiful it all seemed, and how happy! Was not Dolly a lucky girl to have her lot thrown in such a paradise? How enjoyable she must find it all!—she whose good spirits knew always how "to take the most out of" whatever was pleasant. How he pictured her delight in a scene of such loveliness!

"That's Inverness Terrace yonder," said a policeman, of whom he inquired the way—"that range of small houses you see there," and he pointed to a trim-looking row of cottage-houses on a sort of artificial embankment which elevated them above the surrounding buildings, and gave a view of the Thames as it wound through the rich meadows beneath. They were neat with that English neatness which at once pleases and shocks a foreign eye—the trim propriety that loves comfort, but has no heart for beauty. Thus each was like his neighbour: the very jalousies were painted the same colour; and every ranunculus in one garden had his brother in the next. No. 4 was soon found, and Tony rang the bell and inquired for Miss Stewart.

"She's in the school-room with the young ladies," said the woman-servant; "but if you'll step in and tell me your name, I'll send her to you."

"Just say that I have come from her own neighbourhood; or, better, say Mr Tony Butler would be glad to see her." He had scarcely been a moment in the neat but formal-looking front parlour, when a very tall, thin, somewhat severe-looking lady—not old, nor yet young—entered, and, without any salutation, said, "You asked for Miss Stewart, sir—are you a relative of hers?"

“No, madam. My mother and Miss Stewart’s father are neighbours and very old friends ; and being by accident in London, I desired to see her, and bring back news of her to the Doctor.”

“At her father’s request, of course ?”

“No, madam ; I cannot say so, for I left home suddenly, and had no time to tell him of my journey.”

“Nor any letter from him ?”

“None, madam.”

The thin lady pursed up her parched lips, and bent her keen, cold eyes on the youth, who really felt his cheek grow hot under the scrutiny. He knew that his confession did not serve to confirm his position ; and he heartily wished himself out of the house again.

“I think, then, sir,” said she, coldly, “it will serve every purpose if I inform *you*, that Miss Stewart is well ; and if I tell *her*, that you were kind enough to call and ask after her.”

“I’m sure you are right, madam,” said he hurriedly, moving towards the door, for already he felt as if the ground was on fire beneath him—“quite right ; and I’ll tell the Doctor that though I didn’t see Miss Dora, she was in good health, and very happy.”

"I didn't say anything about her happiness that I remember, sir ; but as I see her now passing the door, I may leave that matter to come from her own lips. Miss Stewart," cried she, louder, "there is a gentleman here, who has come to inquire after you." A very pale but nicely-featured young girl, wearing a cap—her hair had been lately cut short in a fever—entered the room, and, with a sudden flush that made her positively handsome, held out her hand to young Butler, saying, "Oh, Tony, I never expected to see you here ! how are all at home ?"

Too much shocked at the change in her appearance to speak, Tony could only mumble out a few broken words about her father.

"Yes," cried she, eagerly, "his last letter says that he rides old Dobbin about just as well as ever ; perhaps it is, says he, that having both of us grown old together, we bear our years with more tolerance to each other ; but won't you sit down, Tony ? you're not going away till I have talked a little with you."

"Is the music lesson finished, Miss Stewart ?" asked the thin lady, sternly.

"Yes, ma'am ; we have done everything but sacred history."

"Everything but the one important task, you might have said, Miss Stewart ; but, perhaps, you

are not now exactly in the temperament to resume teaching for to-day ; and, as this young gentleman's mission is apparently to report, not only on your health, but your happiness, I shall leave you a quarter of an hour to give him his instructions."

"I hate that woman," muttered Tony, as the door closed after her.

"No, Tony, she's not unkind ; but she doesn't exactly see the world the way you and I used long ago. What a great big man you have grown !"

"And what a fine tall girl, you ! And I used to call you a stump."

"Ay, there were few compliments wasted between us in those days ; but weren't they happy !"

"Do you remember them all, Dolly ?"

"Every one of them—the climbing the big cherry-tree the day the branch broke, and we both fell into the melon-bed ; the hunting for eels under the stones in the river—wasn't that rare sport ? and going out to sea in that leaky little boat, that I'd not have courage to cross the Thames in now !—oh, Tony, tell me, you never were so jolly since ?"

"I don't think I was ; and what's worse, Dolly, I doubt if I ever shall be."

The tone of deep despondency of these words went to her heart, and her lip trembled as she said—

“Have you had any bad news of late? is there anything going wrong with you?”

“No, Dolly, nothing new, nothing strange, nothing beyond the fact that I have been staring at, though I did not see it, three years back, that I am a great hulking idle dog, of no earthly use to himself or to anybody else. However, I *have* opened my eyes to it at last, and here I am, come to seek my fortune, as we used to say long ago, which, after all, seems a far nicer thing in a fairy book than when reduced to a fact.”

Dolly gave a little short cough, to cover a faint sigh which escaped her, for she, too, knew something about seeking her fortune, and that the search was not always a success.

“And what are you thinking of doing, Tony?” asked she, eagerly.

“Like all lazy good-for-nothings, I begin by begging; that is to say, I have been to a great man this morning who knew my father, to ask him to give me something—to make me something.”

“A soldier, I suppose?”

“No; mother won’t listen to that. She’s so indignant about the way they treated my poor father about that good-service pension—one of a race that has been pouring out their blood like water for three

centuries back—that she says she'd not let me accept a commission if it were offered to me, without it came coupled with a full apology for the wrong done my father; and as I am too old for the navy, and too ignorant for most other things, it will push all the great man's ingenuity very close to find out the corner to suit me."

"They talk a deal about Australia, Tony; and, indeed, I sometimes think I'd like to go there myself. I read in the 'Times' t'other day that a dairymaid got as much as forty-six pounds a-year and her board; only fancy, forty-six pounds a-year! Do you know," added she, in a cautious whisper, "I have only eighteen pounds here, and was in rare luck too, they say, to get it."

"What if we were to set out together, Dolly?" said he, laughing; but a deep scarlet flush covered her face, and though she tried to laugh too, she had to turn her head away, for the tears were in her eyes.

"But how could *you* turn dairymaid, Dolly?" cried he, half reproachfully.

"Just as well, or rather better, than *you* turn shepherd or gold-digger. As to mere labour, it would be nothing; as to any loss of condition, I'd not feel it, and therefore not suffer it."

"Oh, I have no snobbery myself about working with my hands," added he, hastily; "heaven help me if I had, for my head wouldn't keep me; but a girl's bringing-up is so different from a boy's; she oughtn't to do anything menial out of her own home."

"We ought all of us just to do our best, Tony, and what leaves us less of a burden to others—that's my reading of it; and when we do that we'll have a quiet conscience, and that's something that many a rich man couldn't buy with all his money."

"I think it's the time for the children's dinner, Miss Stewart," said the grim lady, entering. "I am sorry it should cut short an interview so interesting."

A half-angry reply rose to Tony's lips, when a look from Dora stopped him, and he stammered out, "May I call and see 'you again before I go back?"

"When *do* you go back, young gentleman?" asked the thin lady.

"That's more than I can tell. This week if I can; next week if I must."

"If you'll write me a line then, and say what day it would be your convenience to come down here, I will reply, and state whether it will be Miss Stewart's and mine to receive you."

"Come at all events," said Dora, in a low voice, as they shook hands and parted.

“Poor Dolly!” muttered he, as he went his way towards town. “What between the pale cheeks and the cropped hair, and the odious cap, I’d never have known her!” He suddenly heard the sound of footsteps behind him, and turning he saw her running towards him at full speed.

“You had forgotten your cane, Tony,” said she, half breathless, “and I knew it was an old favourite of yours, and you’d be sorry to think it was lost. Tell me one thing,” cried she, and her cheek flushed even a deeper hue than the exercise had given it, “could you—would you be a clerk—in a merchant’s office, I mean?”

“Why do you ask me, Dolly?” said he, for her eager and anxious face directed all his solicitude from himself to her.

“If you only would, and could, Tony,” continued she, “write. No; make papa write me a line to say so. There, I have no time for more; I have already done enough to secure me a rare lesson when I get back. Don’t come here again.”

She was gone before he could answer her; and with a heavier heart, and a very puzzled head, he resumed his road to London, “Don’t come here again” ringing in his head as he went.

CHAPTER VII.

LYLE ABBEY AND ITS GUESTS.

THE company at Lyle Abbey saw very little of Maitland for some days after his arrival: he never appeared of a morning, he only once came down to dinner; his pretext was indifferent health, and Mark showed a disposition to quarrel with any one who disputed it. Not, indeed, that the squirearchy then present were at all disposed to regret Maitland's absence. They would infinitely rather have discussed his peculiarities in secret committee than meet himself in open debate. It was not very easy to say why they did not like him, but such was the fact. It was not that he overbore them by any species of assumption; he neither took on him airs of superior station nor of superior knowledge; he was neither insolent nor haughty; nor was he even, what sometimes is not less resented, careless

and indifferent. His manner was a sort of middle term between popularity-seeking and inattention. The most marked trait in it was one common enough in persons who have lived much on the Continent—a great preference for the society of ladies, making him almost ignore or avoid the presence of the men around him. Not that Maitland was what is called *petit maître*; there was not any of that flippant prettiness which is supposed to have its fascination for the fair sex; he was quiet without any touch of over-seriousness, very respectful, and, at the same time, with an insinuated friendliness as though the person he talked to was one selected for especial cordiality; and there was a sort of tender languor, too, about him, that implied some secret care in his heart, of which each who listened to his conversation was sure to fancy that she was, one day, to become the chosen depositary.

“Do you know, Bella,” said Mrs Trafford, as they sat together at the fire in her dressing-room, “I shall end by half-loving him.”

“I haven’t got that far, Alice, though I own that I am less in dread of him than I was. His superiority is not so crushing as I feared it might be; and, certainly, if he be the Admirable Crichton

Mark pretends he is, he takes every possible pains to avoid all display of it."

"There may be some impertinence in that," said the other. "Did you remark how he was a week here before he as much as owned he knew anything of music, and listened to our weary little ballads every evening without a word? and last night, out of pure caprice, as it seemed, he sits down, and sings song after song of Verdi's difficult music, with a tenor that reminds one of Mario."

"And which has quite convinced old Mrs Maxwell that he is a professional, or, as she called it, 'a singing man'?"

"She would call him a sketching man, if she saw the caricature he made of herself in the pony carriage, which he tore up the moment he showed to me."

"One thing is clear, Alice—he means that we should like him; but he is too clever to set about it in any vulgar spirit of captivation."

"That is, he seeks regard for personal qualities rather more than admiration for his high gifts of intellect. Well, up to this, it is his cleverness that I like."

"What puzzles me is why he ever came here. He is asked about everywhere, has all manner of

great houses open to him, and stores of fine people, of whose intimacy you can see he is proud, and yet he comes down to a dull country place in a dull county ; and, stranger than all, he seems to like it.”

“ John Hunter says it is debt,” said Mrs Traf-
ford.

“ Mark Fortescue hints that a rich and handsome
widow has something to say to it.”

“ Paul M’Clintock declares that he saw your pic-
ture by Ary Scheffer in the Exhibition, and fell
madly in love with it, Bella.”

“ And old Colonel Orde says that he is intriguing
to get in for the borough of Coleraine ; that he saw
him in the garden t’other morning with a list of the
electors in his hand.”

“ My conjecture is, that he is intolerably bored
everywhere, and came down here to try the effects
of a new mode of the infliction that he had never
experienced before. What else would explain a
project I heard him arrange for this morning,—a
walk with Beck Graham !”

“ Yes, I was in the window when he asked her
where she usually went in those wanderings over
the fern hills, with that great umbrella ; and she
told him to visit an old lady—a Mrs Butler—who

had been a dear friend of her mother's; and then he said, 'I wish you'd take me with you. I have a positive weakness for old ladies;' and so the bargain was struck, that they were to go to the cottage to-day together."

"Beck, of course, fancying that it means a distinct avowal of attention to herself."

"And her sister, Sally, very fully persuaded that Maitland is a suitor for her hand, and cunningly securing Beck's good offices before he risks a declaration."

"Sally already believes that Mark is what she calls 'landed'; and she gave me some pretty broad hints about the insufferable pretensions of younger sons, to which class she consigns him."

"And Beck told me yesterday, in confidence, that Tony had been sent away from home by his mother, as the last resource against the consequences of his fatal passion for her."

"Poor Tony," sighed the young widow, "he never thought of her."

"Did he tell you as much, Alice?" said her sister, slyly.

"No, dear; it is the one subject—I mean love in any shape—that we never discussed. The poor boy confessed to me all his griefs about his purposeless,

idle life, his mother's straitened fortune, and his uncle's heartless indifference ; everything, in short, that lay heavily on his heart."

"Everything but the heaviest, Alice," said the other, smiling.

"Well, if he had opened that sorrow, I'd have heard him without anger ; I'd have honestly told him it was a very vain and fruitless pursuit. But still my own heart would have declared to me, that a young fellow is all the better for some romance of this kind—that it elevates motives and dignifies actions, and, not least of all advantages, makes him very uncompanionable for creatures of mere dissipation and excess."

"But that, of course, you were merely objective the while—the source from which so many admirable results were to issue, and never so much as disturbed by the breath of his attachment. Isn't that so ?"

"I'd have said, You're a very silly boy if you imagine that anything can come of all this."

"And if he were to ask for the reason, and say, Alice, are you not your own mistress—rich—free to do whatever you incline to do ? Why should you call me a fool for loving you ?"

"Take my word for it, Bella, he'll never risk the

answer he'd be sure to meet to such a speech," said the other, haughtily ; and Isabella, who felt a sort of awe of her sister at certain moments, desisted from the theme. "Look ! yonder they go, Maitland and Rebecca, not exactly arm-in-arm, but with bent-down heads, and that propinquity that implies close converse."

"I declare I feel quite jealous—I mean on your account, Bella," said Mrs Trafford.

"Never mind *my* interests in the matter, Alice," said she, reddening ; "it is a matter of the most complete indifference to me with whom he walks or talks. Mr Norman Maitland is not to me one whit more of consequence than is Tony Butler to my sister."

"That's a confession, Bella—a confession wrung out of a hasty moment ; for Tony certainly likes *me*, and *I* know it."

"Well, then, the cases are not similar, for Mr Maitland does not care for me ; or if he does, I don't know it, nor do I want to know it."

"Come, darling, put on your shawl, and let us have a breezy walk on the cliffs before the day darkens ; neither of these gentlemen are worth the slightest estrangement between such sisters as we are. Whether Tony likes me or not, don't steal him

from me, and I'll promise you to be just as loyal with regard to the other. How I'd like to know what they are talking of there!"

As it is not impossible the reader may in some slight degree participate in the fair widow's sentiment, we mean to take up the conversation just as it reached the time in which the remark was applied to it. Miss Becky Graham was giving her companion a sketchy description of all the persons then at the Abbey, not taking any especial care to be epigrammatic or picturesque, but to be literal and truthful.

"Mrs Maxwell—an old horror—tolerated just because she owns Tilney Park, and can leave it to whom she likes; and the Lyles hope it will fall to Mark, or possibly to Bella. They stand to win on either."

"And which is the favourite?" asked Maitland, with a faint smile.

"You'd like to think Isabella," said Miss Becky, with a sharp piercing glance to read his thoughts at an unguarded moment, if he had such, "but she is not. Old aunt Maxwell—she's as much your aunt as theirs—detests girls, and has, I actually believe, thoughts of marrying again. By the way, you said you wanted money—why not 'go in' there? eight

thousand a-year in land, real estate, and a fine old house with some great timber around it."

"I want to pay my old debts, not incur new ones, my dear Miss Graham."

"I'm not your dear Miss Graham—I'm Beck, or Becky, or I'm Miss Rebecca Graham, if you want to be respectful. But what do you say to the Maxwell handicap? I could do you a good turn there; she lets me say what I please to her."

"I'd rather you'd give me that privilege with yourself, charming Rebecca."

"Don't, I say; don't try that tiresome old dodge of mock flattery. I'm not charming, any more than you are honest or straightforward. Let us be on the square—do you understand that? of course you do. Whom shall I trot out next for you?—for the whole lot shall be disposed of without any reserve. Will you have Sir Arthur, with his tiresome Indian stories, enhanced to himself by all the lacs of rupees that are associated with them? Will you have the gay widow, who married for pique, and inherited a great fortune by a blunder? Will you have Isabella, who is angling for a coronet, but would not refuse *you* if you are rich enough? Will you have that very light dragoon, who thinks 'ours' the standard for manners in Europe?—or the two elder

brothers, grey-headed, pale-faced, husky-voiced civil servants, working hard to make a fortune in advance of a liver complaint? Say the 'number,' and the animal shall be led out for inspection."

"After all, it is scarcely fair in me to ask it, for I don't come as a buyer."

"Well, if you have a taste for that sort of thing —are we out of sight of the windows?—if so, let me have a cigarette like that you have there. I haven't smoked for five months. Oh! isn't it a pleasure?"

"Tell me about Mrs Butler—who is she?"

"She is Mrs Butler: and her husband, when he was alive, was Colonel Butler, militarily known as Wat Tartar. He was a terrible pipeclay; and her son Tony is the factotum at the Abbey; or rather he was, till Mark told him to shave a poodle, or singe a pony, or paint a wheelbarrow—I forget; but I know it was something he had done once out of good-humour, and the hussar creature fancied he'd make him do it again through an indignity."

"And he—I mean Butler—stands upon being a gentleman?"

"I should think he does; is not his birth good?"

"Certainly; the Butlers are of an old stock."

"They talk of an uncle, Sir Ramrod—it isn't

Ramrod, but it's like it—a tiresome old fellow, who was envoy at Naples, and who married, I believe, a ballet-dancer, and who might leave Tony all his fortune, if he liked—which he doesn't."

"Having no family of his own?" asked Maitland, as he puffed his cigar.

"None; but that doesn't matter, for he has turned Jesuit, and will leave everything to the sacred something or other in Rome. I've heard all that from old Widow Butler, who has a perfect passion for talking of her amiable brother-in-law, as she calls him. She hates him—always did hate him—and taught Tony to hate him; and with all that it was only yesterday she said to me that perhaps she was not fully justified in sending back unopened two letters he had written to her—one after the loss of some Canadian bonds of hers, which got rumoured abroad in the newspapers; the other was on Tony's coming of age; and she said, 'Becky, I begin to suspect that I had no right to carry my own unforgiveness to the extent of an injury to my boy—tell me what you would do.'"

"And what was your answer?"

"I'd have made it up with the old swell. I'd say, Is not this boy more to you than all those long-petticoated tonsured humbugs, who can always

cheat some one or other out of an inheritance? I'd say, Look at him, and you'll fancy it's Walter telling you that he forgives you."

"If he be like most of his order, Miss Becky, he'd only smile at your appeal," said Maitland, coldly.

"Well, I'd not let it be laughing matter with him, I can tell you; stupid wills are broken every day of the week, and I don't think the Jesuits are in such favour in England that a jury would decide for them against an English youth of the kith and kin of the testator."

"You speak cleverly, Miss Graham, and you show that you know all the value that attaches to popular sympathy in the age we live in."

"And don't you agree with me?"

"Ah, there's a deal to be said on either side."

"Then, for heaven's sake, don't say it. There—no—more to the left—there, where you see the blue smoke rising over the rocks—there stands the widow's cottage. I don't know how she endures the loneliness of it. Could *you* face such a life?"

"A double solitude—what the French call an *egoisme à deux*—is not so insupportable. In fact, it all depends upon 'the partner with whom we share our isolation.'" He threw a tone of half ten-

derness into the words that made them very significant, and Rebecca gave him one of her quick sudden glances with which she often read a secret motive. This time, however, she failed. There was nothing in that sallow but handsome face that revealed a clue to anything.

“I’ll have to ask Mrs Butler’s leave before I present you,” said she, suddenly.

“Of course, I’ll await her permission.”

“The chances are she’ll say no; indeed, it is all but certain she will.”

“Then I must resign myself to patience and a cigar till you come out again,” said he, calmly.

“Shall I say that there’s any reason for your visit? Do you know any Butlers, or have you any relationship, real or pretended, with the family, that would make a pretext for coming to see her?”

Had Miss Graham only glanced as keenly at Maitland’s features now as she had a few moments back, she might have seen a faint—a very faint flush cross his cheek, and then give way to a deep paleness. “No,” said he, coldly, “I cannot pretend the shadow of a claim to her acquaintance, and I can scarcely presume to ask you to present me as a friend of your own, except in the common acceptance given to the word.”

“Oh, I'll do that readily enough. Bless your heart, if there was anything to be gained by it I'd call you my cousin, and address you as Norman all the time of the visit.”

“If you but knew how the familiarity would flatter me, particularly were I to return it!”

“And call *me* Becky—I hope! Well, you *are* a cool hand!”

“My friends are in the habit of amusing themselves with my diffidence and my timidity.”

“They must be very ill off for a pastime, then. I used to think Mark Lyle bad enough, but his is a blushing bashfulness compared to yours.”

“You only see me in my struggle to overcome a natural defect, Miss Graham—just as a coward assumes the bully to conceal his poltroonery; you regard in me the mock audacity that strives to shroud a most painful modesty.”

She looked full at him for an instant, and then burst into a loud and joyful fit of laughter, in which he joined without the faintest show of displeasure. “Well, I believe you are good-tempered,” said she, frankly.

“The best in the world; I am very seldom angry; I never bear malice.”

"Have you any other good qualities?" asked she, with a slight mockery in her voice.

"Yes—many: I am trustful to the verge of credulity; I am generous to the limits of extravagance; I am unswerving in my friendships, and without the taint of a selfishness in all my nature."

"How nice that is! or how nice it must be!"

"I could grow eloquent over my gifts, if it were not that my bashfulness might embarrass me."

"Have you any faults?"

"I don't think so; at least I can't recall any."

"Nor failings?"

"Failings! perhaps," said he, dubiously; "but they are, after all, mere weaknesses—such as a liking for splendour—a love of luxury generally—a taste for profusion, a sort of regal profusion, in daily life, which occasionally jars with my circumstances, making me, not irritable—I am never irritable—but low-spirited and depressed."

"Then, from what you have told me, I think I'd better say to Mrs Butler that there's an angel waiting outside who is most anxious to make her acquaintance."

"Do so; and add, that he'll fold his wings, and sit on this stone till you come to fetch him."

"*Au revoir*, Gabriel, then," said she, passing in at the wicket, and taking her way through the little garden.

Maitland sat discussing in his own mind the problem how far Alcibiades was right or wrong in endeavouring to divert the world from any criticism of himself by a certain alteration in his dog's tail, rather opining that in our day, at least, the wiser course would have been to avoid all comment whatsoever,—the imputation of an eccentricity being only second to the accusation of a crime. With the Greeks of that day the false scent was probably a success; with the English of ours, the real wisdom is not to be hunted. "Oh, if it were all to be done again, how very differently I should do it!"

"Indeed, and in what respect?" said a voice behind his shoulder. He looked up and saw Beck Graham gazing on him with something of interest in her expression. "How so?" cried she again. Not in the slightest degree discomposed or flurried, he lay lazily back on the sward, and, drawing his hand over his eyes to shade them from the sun, said, in a half-languid weary tone, "If it were to do again, I'd go in for happiness."

"What do you mean by happiness?"

“What we all mean by it: an organised selfishness, that draws a close cordon round our home, and takes care to keep out, so far as possible, duns, bores, fevers, and fashionable acquaintances. By the way, is your visit ended, or will she see me?”

“Not to-day. She hopes to-morrow to be able. She asks if you are of the Maitlands of Gillie—Gillie, not ‘Crankie,’ but a sound like it—and if your mother’s name was Janet.”

“And I trust, from the little you know of me, you assured her it could not be,” said he, calmly.

“Well, I said that I knew no more of your family than all the rest of us up at the Abbey, who have been sifting all the Maitlands in the three kingdoms, in the hope of finding you.”

“How flattering! and, at the same time, how vain a labour! The name came to me with some fortune. I took it as I’d have taken a more ill-sounding one, for money! Who wouldn’t be baptised in bank stock? I hope it’s not on the plea of my mother being Janet, that she consents to receive me?”

“She hopes you are Lady Janet’s son, and that you have the Maitland eyes, which it seems are dark, and a something in their manner which she assures me was especially captivating.”

“And for which, I trust, you vouched?”

“Yes. I said you were a clever sort of person, that could do a number of things well, and that I for one didn’t quarrel with your vanity or conceit, but thought them rather good fun.”

“So they are! and we’ll laugh at them together,” said he, rising, and preparing to set out. “What a blessing to find one that really understands me! I wish to heaven that you were not engaged!”

“And who says I am?” cried she, almost fiercely.

“Did I dream it? Who knows? The fact is, my dear Miss Becky, we do talk with such a rare freedom to each other, it is pardonable to mix up one’s reveries with his actual information. How do you call that ruin yonder?”

“Duluce.”

“And that great bluff beyond it?”

“Fairhead.”

“I’ll take a long walk to-morrow, and visit that part of the coast.”

“You are forgetting you are to call on Mrs Butler.”

“So I was. At what hour are we to be here?”

“There is no question of ‘we’ in the matter; your modesty must make its advances alone.”

“You are not angry with me, carissima Rebecca?”

“Don’t think that a familiarity is less a liberty because it is dressed in a foreign tongue.”

"But it would 'out ;' the expression forced itself from my lips in spite of me, just as some of the sharp things you have been saying to me were perfectly irrepressible."

"I suspect you like this sort of sparring ?"

"Delight in it."

"So do I. There's only one condition I make : whenever you mean to take off the gloves, and intend to hit out hard, that you'll say so before. Is that agreed ?"

"It's a bargain."

She held out her hand frankly, and he took it as cordially ; and in a hearty squeeze the compact was ratified.

"Shall I tell you," said she, as they drew nigh the Abbey, "that you are a great puzzle to us all here ? We none of us can guess how so great a person as yourself should condescend to come down to such an out-o'-the-world spot, and waste his fascinations on such dull company."

"Your explanation, I'll wager, was the true one : let me hear it."

"I called it eccentricity ; the oddity of a man who had traded so long in oddity that he grew to be inexplicable, even to himself, and that an Irish country-house was one of the few things you had not

'done,' and that you were determined to 'do' it."

"There was that, and something more," said Maitland, thoughtfully.

"The 'something more' being, I take it, the whole secret."

"As you read me like a book, Miss Rebecca, all I ask is, that you'll shut the volume when you've done with it, and not talk over it with your literary friends."

"It is not my way," said she, half pettishly; and they reached the door as she spoke.

C H A P T E R VIII.

SOME EXPLANATIONS.

If there was anything strange or inexplicable in the appearance of one of Maitland's pretensions in an unfrequented and obscure part of the world—if there was matter in it to puzzle the wise heads of squires, and make country intelligences look confused, there is no earthly reason why any mystification should be practised with our reader. He at least is under our guidance, and to him we impart whatever is known to ourselves. For a variety of reasons, some of which this history later on will disclose—others, the less imminent, we are free now to avow—Mr Norman Maitland had latterly addressed much of his mind to the political intrigues of a foreign country: that country was Naples. He had known it—we are not free to say how, at this place—from his childhood; he knew its people in every rank and class; he knew its dialect in all its

idioms. He could talk the slang of the lazzaroni, and the wild *patois* of Calabria, just as fluently as that composite language which the King Ferdinand used, and which was a blending of the vulgarisms of the Chiaja with the Frenchified chit-chat of the Court.

There were events happening in Italy which, though not for the moment involving the question of Naples, suggested to the wiser heads in that country the sense of a coming peril. We cannot, at this place, explain how or why Maitland should have been a sharer in these deeds ; it is enough to say that he was one of a little knot who had free access to the palace, and enjoyed constant intercourse with the King—free to tell him of all that went on in his brilliant capital of vice and levity—to narrate its duels, its defalcations, its intrigues, its family scandals and domestic disgraces—to talk of anything and everything but one ;—not a word on politics was to escape them ; never in the most remote way was a syllable to drop of either what was happening in the State, or what comments the French or English press might pass on it. No allusion was to escape on questions of government, nor the name of a minister to be spoken, except he were the hero of some notorious scandal. All these pre-

cautions could not stifle fear. The menials had seen the handwriting on the wall before Belshazzar's eyes had fallen on it. The men who stood near the throne saw that it rocked already. There was but one theme within the palace—the fidelity of the army; and every rude passage between the soldiery and the people seemed to testify to that faithfulness. Amongst those who were supposed to enjoy the sovereign confidence—for none, in reality, possessed it—was the Count Caffarelli, a man of very high family and large fortune, and, though not in the slightest degree tinctured with Liberalism in politics, one of the very few Neapolitan nobles who either understood the drift, or estimated the force, of the party of action. He foresaw the coming struggle, and boded ill of its result. With Mr Maitland he lived in closest intimacy. The Italian, though older than the Englishman, had been his companion in years of dissipation. In every capital of Europe these two men had left traditions of extravagance and excess. They had an easy access to the highest circles in every city, and it was their pleasure to mix in all, even to the lowest. Between them there had grown what, between such men, represented a strong friendship—that is, either would readily have staked his life or his fortune; in other

words, have fought a duel, or paid the play-debts of the other. Each knew the exact rules of honour which guided the conduct of the other, and knew besides that no other principles than these held any sway or influence over him.

Caffarelli saw that the Bourbon throne was in danger, and with it the fortunes of all who adhered to the dynasty. If all his prejudices and sympathies were with monarchy, these would not have prevented him from making terms with the revolution, if he thought the revolution could be trusted; but this was precisely what he did not, could not, believe. "Ceux qui sont Bleus restent Bleus," said the first Napoleon; and so Caffarelli assured himself that a "canaille" always would be a canaille. Philip Egalité was a case in point of what came of such concessions; therefore he decided it was better to stand by the monarchy, and that real policy consisted in providing that there should be a monarchy to stand by.

To play that mock game of popularity, the being cheered by the lazzaroni, was the extent of toleration to which the King could be persuaded. Indeed, he thought these *vivas* the hearty outburst of a fervent and affectionate loyalty, and many of his ministers appeared to concur with him.

Caffarelli, who was Master of the Horse, deemed otherwise, and confessed to Maitland that, though assassination was cheap enough in the quarter of Santa Lucia, there was a most indiscriminating indifference as to who might be the victim, and that the old Marquess of Montanara, the Prefect of the Palace, would not cost a "carlino" more than the veriest follower of Mazzini.

Both Caffarelli and Maitland enjoyed secret sources of information. They were members of that strange league which has a link in every grade and class of Neapolitan society, and makes the very highest in station the confidant and the accomplice of the most degraded and the meanest. This sect, called *La Camorra*, was originally a mere system of organised extortion, driving, by force of menace, an impost on every trade and occupation, and exacting its dues by means of agents well known to be capable of the greatest crimes. Caffarelli, who had long employed its services to assist him in his intrigues or accomplish his vengeance, was a splendid contributor to its resources. He was rich and munificent; he loved profusion, but he adored it when it could be made the main-spring of some dark and mysterious machinery. Though the Camorra was not in the remotest

degree political, Caffarelli learned, through its agency, that the revolutionary party were hourly gaining strength and courage. They saw the growing discontent that spread abroad about the ruling dynasty, and they knew how little favour would be shown the Bourbons by the Western Powers, whose counsels had been so flatly rejected, and whose warnings despised. They felt that their hour was approaching, and that Northern Italy would soon hasten to their aid if the work of overthrow were once fairly begun. Their only doubts were, lest the success, when achieved, should have won nothing for them. It may be as in Forty-eight, said they; we may drive the King out of Naples, as we drove the Austrians out of Milan, and after all only be conquering a larger kingdom for the House of Savoy. Hence they hesitated and held back; nor were their fears causeless. For what had revolution poured forth its blood like water in Paris? To raise up the despotism of the Second Empire!

Caffarelli was in possession of all this; he knew what they hoped, and wished, and feared. The Camorra itself numbered many professed revolutionists ("Reds," as they liked to be called) in its sect, but was itself untinctured by politics.

The wily Count thought that it was a pity so good an organisation should be wasted on mere extortion and robbery. There were higher crimes they might attain to, and grander interests they might subserve. Never, perhaps, was the world of Europe so much in the hands of a few powerful men. Withdraw from it, say, half-a-dozen—one could name them at once—and what a change might come over the Continent! Caffarelli was no assassin; but there are men, and he was one of them, that can trifle with great crimes, just as children play with fire—who can jest with them, laugh at them, and sport with them, till, out of mere familiarity, they forget the horror they should inspire and the penalty they enforce. He had known Orsini intimately, and liked him; nor did he talk of his memory with less affection that he had died beneath the guillotine. He would not himself engage in a crime that would dishonour his name; but he knew there were a great number of people in the world who could no more be punctilious about honour than about the linen they wore—fellows who walked in rags and dined off garlic. Why should they stick at trifles? *They* had no noble escutcheons to be tarnished, no splendid names, no high lineage to be disgraced.

In fact there were crimes that became them, just as certain forms of labour suited them. They worked with their hands in each case. Amongst the Camorra he knew many such. The difficulty was to bring the power of the sect to bear upon the questions that engaged him. It would not have been difficult to make them revolutionists—the one word pillage would have sufficed for that; the puzzle was how to make them royalists. Mere pay would not do. These fellows had got a taste for irregular gain. To expect to win them over by pay, or retain them by discipline, was to hope to convert a poacher by inviting him to a battue. Caffarelli had revolved the matter very long and carefully; he had talked it over scores of times with Maitland. They agreed that the Camorra had great capabilities, if one only could use them. Through the members of that league in the army they had learned that the troops, the long-vaunted reliance of the monarchy, could not be trusted. Many regiments were ready to take arms with the Reds; many more would disband and return to their homes. As for the navy, they declared there was not one ship's company would stand by the Sovereign. The most well-affected would be neutral; none save the foreign legions would fight for the

King. The question then was, to reinforce these, and at once—a matter far more difficult than it used to be. Switzerland would no longer permit this recruitment. Austria would give none but her criminals. America, it was said, abounded in ardent adventurous spirits, that would readily risk life in pursuit of fortune; but then the cause was not one which, by any ingenuity, could be made to seem that of liberty. Nothing then remained but Ireland. There there was bravery and poverty both. Thousands, who had no fears and very little food, ready for any enterprise, but far readier for one which could be dignified as being the battle of the Truth and the cause of the Holy Father.

An Irish legion, some five or six thousand devout Catholics and valiant soldiers, was a project that the Minister of War at once embraced. His Excellency saw Maitland on it, and talked over the whole plan. Maitland was himself to direct all its operations. Caffarelli would correspond with him from Naples, and, in case of any complication or difficulty, shroud the Minister from attack. Ample funds would be provided. The men could be engaged as labourers upon some great public work, and forwarded in small drafts to a convenient port. Arms could be easily procured from Liège. Officers

could be readily obtained, either Irish, or Poles or Hungarians who could speak English. In a word, all the details had been well discussed and considered, and Maitland, on arriving in London, had again talked over the project with wise and crafty heads, whose prudent counsels showed him how little fit he was personally to negotiate directly with the Irish peasant, and how imperative above all things it was to depute this part of his task to some clever native, capable of employing the subordinates he needed. "Hide yourself," said they, "in some out-of-the-way spot in Wales or Scotland; even the far north of Ireland will do; remain anywhere near enough to have frequent communication with your agent, but neither be seen nor known in the plot yourself. Your English talk and your English accent would destroy more confidence than your English gold would buy."

Such an agent was soon found—a man admirably adapted in many respects for the station. He had been an adventurer all his life;—served with the French in Austria, and the Austrians in the Banat; held an independent command of Turks during the Crimean war; besides episodically having "done a little," as he called it, on the Indian frontier with the Yankees; and served on the staff of Rosas at

La Plata;—all his great and varied experiences tending to one solitary conviction, that no real success was ever to be attained in anything except by means of Irishmen; nor could order, peace, and loyalty be ever established anywhere without their assistance. If he was one of the bravest men living, he was one of the most pushing and impertinent. He would have maintained a point of law against the Lord Chancellor, and contested tactics with a Marshal of France. He thought himself the ornament of any society he entered, and his vanity, in matters of intellect, was only surpassed by his personal conceit. And now one word as to his appearance. With the aid of cleverly-constructed boots he stood five feet four, but was squarely, stoutly built, broad in the chest, and very bow-legged; his head was large, and seemed larger from a mass of fiery red hair, of which he was immensely vain as the true Celtic colour; he wore great whiskers, a mustache, and chin-tuft; but the flaming hue of these seemed actually tamed and toned down beside his eyes, which resembled two flaring carbuncles. They were the most excitable, quarrelsome, restless pair of orbs that ever beamed in a human head. They twinkled and sparkled with an incessant mischief, and they darted such inso-

lent glances right and left, as seemed to say, "Is there any one present who will presume to contradict me?"

His boundless self-conceit would have been droll if it had not been so offensive. His theory was this: all men detested him; all women adored him. Europe had done little better than intrigue for the last quarter of a century what country could secure his services. As for the insolent things he had said to kings and emperors, and the soft speeches that empresses and queens had made to himself, they would fill a volume. Believe him, and he had been on terms of more than intimacy in every royal palace of the Continent. Show the slightest semblance of doubt in him, and the chances were that he'd have had you "out" in the morning.

Amongst his self-delusions, it was one to believe that his voice and accent were peculiarly insinuating. There was, it is true, a certain slippery insincerity about them, but the vulgarity was the chief characteristic; and his brogue was that of Leinster, which, even to Irish ears, is insufferable.

Such was, in brief, the gentleman who called himself Major M'Caskey, Knight-Commander of various orders, and C.S. in the Pope's household

—which, interpreted, means Cameriere Secreto — a something which corresponds to gentleman in waiting. Maitland and he had never met. They had corresponded freely, and the letters of the Major had by no means made a favourable impression upon Maitland, who had more than once forwarded extracts from them to the committees in London, pettishly asking, “if something better could not be found than the writer of this rubbish.” And yet, for the work before him, “the writer of this rubbish” was a most competent hand. He knew his countrymen well—knew how to approach them by those mingled appeals to their love of adventure and love of gain—their passion for fighting, for carelessness, for disorder; and, above all, that wide uncertainty as to what is to come, which is to an Irishman’s nature the most irresistible of all seductions. The Major had established committees—in other words, recruiting depots—in several county towns; had named a considerable number of petty officers; and was only waiting Maitland’s orders whether or not he should propose the expedition to adventurous but out-at-elbows young fellows of a superior station—the class from which officers might be taken. We have now said enough

of him and the project that engaged him to admit of our presenting him to our readers in one of his brief epistles. It was dated

“CASTLE DURROW, *August* —, 18—.

“SIR,—I have the honour to report for your information that I yesterday enrolled in this town and neighbourhood eighteen fine fellows for H.N.M. Two of them are returned convicts, and three more are bound over to come up for sentence at a future assizes, and one, whom I have named a corporal, is the notorious Hayes, who shot Captain Macan on the fair green at Ballinasloe. So you see there's little fear that they'll want to come back here when once they have attained to the style and dignity of Neapolitan citizens. Bounty is higher here by from sixteen to twenty shillings than in Meath; indeed, fellows who can handle a gun, or are anyways ready with a weapon, can always command a job from one of the secret clubs; and my experiences (wide as most men's) lead me entirely to the selection of those who have shown any aptitude for active service. I want your permission and instruction to engage some young gentlemen of family and station, for the which I must necessarily be provided with means of entertainment. ‘Tafel

Gelt ist nicht Teufel's Gelt,' says the Austrian adage; and I believe a very moderate outlay, assisted by my own humble gifts of persuasion, will suffice. 'Séduction de M'Caskey,' was a proverb in the 8th Voltigeurs. You may ask a certain high personage in France, who it was that told him not to despair on a particular evening at Strasbourg. A hundred pounds—better if a hundred and fifty—would be useful. The medals of His Holiness have done well, but I only distribute them in the lower ranks. Some titles would be very advisable if I am to deal with the higher class. Herewith you have a muster-roll of what has been done in two counties; and I say it without fear, not a man in the three kingdoms could have accomplished it but Miles M'C. Marmont could plan, but not execute; Massena execute, but not organise; Soult could do none but the last. It is no vanity makes me declare that I combine all the three qualities. You see me now 'organising'; in a few days you shall judge of me in the field; and, later on, if my convictions do not deceive me, in the higher sphere of directing the great operations of an army. I place these words in your hands that they may be on record. If M'Caskey falls, it is a great destiny cut off; but posterity will see that he died in the full

conviction of his genius. I have drawn on you for thirty-eight, ten, and six ; and to-morrow will draw again for seventy-four, fifteen.

“ Your note has just come. I am forced to say that its tone is not that to which, in the sphere I have moved, I have been accustomed. If I am to regard you as my superior officer, duty cries, Submit. If you be simply a civilian, no matter how exalted, I ask explanation. The dinner at the Dawson Arms *was* necessary ; the champagne was *not* excessive ; none of the company were really drunk before ten o’clock ; and the destruction of the furniture was a *plaisanterie* of a young gentleman from Louth who was going into holy orders, and might most probably not have another such spree in all his life again. Are you satisfied ? If not, tell me what and where any other satisfaction may meet your wishes. You say, Let us meet. I reply, Yes, in any way you desire. You have not answered my demand—it was demand, not request—to be Count M’Caskey. I have written to Count Caffarelli on the subject, and have thoughts of addressing the King. Don’t talk to me of decorations. I have no room for them on the breast of my coat. I am forced to say these things to you, for I cannot persuade myself that you really know or under-

stand the man you correspond with. After all, it took Radetzky a year, and Omar Pasha seventeen months, to arrive at that knowledge which my impatience, unjustly perhaps, complains that you have not attained to. Yet I feel we shall like each other; and were it not like precipitancy, I'd say, Believe me, dear Maitland, very faithfully your friend,

“MILES M'CASKEY.”

The answer to this was very brief, and ran thus—

“LYLE ABBEY, *August.*

“SIR,—You will come to Coleraine, and await my orders there—the first of which will be, to take no liberties of any kind with your obedient servant,

“NORMAN MAITLAND.

“MAJOR M'CASKEY,

“The Dawson Arms, Castle Durrow.

“P.S.—Avoid all English acquaintances on your road. Give yourself out to be a foreigner, and speak as little as possible.”

C H A P T E R I X.

MAITLAND'S FRIEND.

"I DON'T think I'll walk down to the Burnside with you to-day," said Beck Graham to Maitland, on the morning after their excursion.

"And why not?"

"People have begun to talk of our going off together alone, long solitary walks. They say it means something—or nothing."

"So, I opine, does every step and incident of our lives."

"Well. You understand what I intended to say."

"Not very clearly, perhaps; but I shall wait a little farther explanation. What is it that the respectable public imputes to us?"

"That you are a very dangerous companion for a young lady in a country walk."

"But, am I? Don't you think you are in a position to refute such a calumny?"

"I spoke of you as I found you."

"And how might that be?"

"Very amusing at some moments; very absent at others; very desirous to be thought lenient and charitable in your judgments of people, while evidently thinking the worst of every one; and with a rare frankness about yourself, that to any one not very much interested to learn the truth, was really as valuable as the true article."

"But you never charged me with any ungenerous use of my advantage; to make professions, for instance, because I found you alone."

"A little—a very little of that—there was; just as children stamp on thin ice and run away when they hear it crack beneath them."

"Did I go so far as that?"

"Yes; and Sally says, if she was in my place, she'd send papa to you this morning."

"And I should be charmed to see him. There are no people whom I prefer to naval men. They have the fresh, vigorous, healthy tone of their own sea life in all they say."

"Yes; you'd have found him vigorous enough, I promise you."

"And why did you consult your sister at all?"

"I did not consult her; she got all out of me by

cross-questioning. She began by saying, 'That man is a mystery to me ; he has not come down here to look after the widow nor Isabella ; he's not thinking of politics nor the borough ; there's no one here that he wants or cares for. What can he be at ? ' "

"Couldn't you have told her, that he was one of those men who have lived so much in the world, it is a luxury to them to live a little out of it ? Just as it is a relief to sit in a darkened room after your eyes have been dazzled with too strong light. Couldn't you have said, He delights to talk and walk with me, because he sees that he may expand freely, and say what comes uppermost, without any fear of an unfair inference ? That, for the same reason—the pleasure of an unrestricted intercourse—he wishes to know old Mrs Butler, and talk with her—over anything, in short ? Just to keep mind and faculties moving—as a light breeze stirs a lake and prevents stagnation."

"Well. I'm not going to perform Zephyr—even in such a high cause."

"Couldn't you have said, We had a pleasant walk and a mild cigarette together—*voilà tout ?*" said he, languidly.

"I think it would be very easy to hate you—hate you cordially—Mr Norman Maitland."

“ So I’ve been told—and some have even tried it, but always unsuccessfully.”

“ Who is this wonderful foreigner they are making so much of at the Castle and the Viceregal Lodge ? ” cried Mark from one of the window recesses, where he was reading a newspaper. “ Maitland, you who know all these people, who is the Prince Caffarelli ? ”

“ Caffarelli ! it must be the Count,” cried Maitland, hurrying over to see the paragraph. “ The Prince is upwards of eighty ; but his son, Count Caffarelli, is my dearest friend in the world. What could have brought him over to Ireland ? ”

“ Ah ! there is the very question he himself is asking about the great Mr Norman Maitland,” said Mrs Trafford, smiling.

“ My reasons are easily stated. I had an admirable friend, who could secure me a most hospitable reception. I came here to enjoy the courtesies of country home life in a perfection I scarcely believed they could attain to. The most unremitting attention to one’s comfort, combined with the wildest liberty.”

“ And such port wine,” interposed the Commodore, “ as I am free to say no other cellar in the province can rival.”

“ Let us come back to your Prince or Count,” said

Mark, "whichever he is. Why not ask him down here?"

"Yes; we have room," said Lady Lyle; "the McClintocks left this morning."

"By all means, invite him," broke in Mrs Trafford; "that is, if he be what we conjecture the dear friend of Mr Maitland might and should be."

"I am afraid to speak of him," said Maitland; "one deserves a friend by any over-praise; but at Naples, and in his own set, he is thought charming."

"I like Italians myself," said Colonel Hoyle. "I had a fellow I picked up at Malta—a certain Geronimo. I'm not sure he was not a Maltese; but such a salad as he could make! There was everything you could think of in it—tomata, eggs, sardines, radishes, beetroot, cucumber."

"Every Italian is a bit of a cook," said Maitland, relieving adroitly the company from the tiresome detail of the Colonel. "I'll back my friend Caffarelli for a dish of maccaroni against all professional artists."

While the Colonel and his wife got into a hot dispute whether there was or was not a slight flavour of parmesan in the salad, the others gathered around Maitland to hear more of his friend. In-

deed it was something new to all to hear of an Italian of class and condition. They only knew the nation as tenors, or modellers, or language-masters. Their compound idea of Italian was a thing of dark skin and dark eyes—very careless in dress—very submissive in aspect—with a sort of subdued fire, however, in look, that seemed to say how much energy was only sleeping there; and when Maitland sketched the domestic ties of a rich magnate of the land, living a life of luxurious indolence, in a sort of childlike simplicity as to what engaged other men in other countries, without a thought for questions of politics, religion, or literature, living for mere life's sake, he interested them much.

“I shall be delighted to ask him here,” said he, at last; “only let me warn you against disappointment. He'll not be witty like a Frenchman, nor profound like a German, nor energetic like an Englishman—he'll neither want to gain knowledge nor impart it. He'll only ask to be permitted to enjoy the pleasures of a very charming society without any demand being made upon him to contribute anything—to make him fancy, in short, that he knew you all years and years ago, and has just come back out of cloudband to renew the intimacy. Will you have him after this?”

"By all means," was the reply. "Go and write your letter to him."

Maitland went to his room, and soon wrote the following:—

"CARO CARLO MIO,—Who'd have thought of seeing you in Ireland? but I have scarce courage to ask you how and why you came here, lest you retort the question upon myself. For the moment, however, I am comfortably established in a goodish sort of country-house, with some pretty women, and, thank Heaven, no young men save one son of the family, whom I have made sufficiently afraid of me to repress all familiarities. They beg me to ask you here, and I see nothing against it. We eat and drink very well. The place is healthy, and though the climate is detestable, it braces and gives appetite. We shall have, at all events, ample time to talk over much that interests us both, and so I say, Come!"

"The road is by Belfast, and thence to Coleraine, where we shall take care to meet you. I ought to add that your host's name is Sir Arthur Lyle, an Anglo-Indian, but who, thank your stars for it! being a civilian, has neither shot tigers nor stuck pigs. It will also be a relief to you to learn that there's no sport of any kind in the neighbourhood,

and there cannot be the shade of a pretext for making you mount a horse or carry a gun, nor can any insidious tormentor persecute you with objects of interest or antiquity ; and so, once again, Come, and believe me, ever your most cordial friend,

“ N. MAITLAND.

“ There is no reason why you should not be here by Saturday, so that, if nothing contrary is declared, I shall look out for you by that day ; but write at all events.”

CHAPTER X.

A BLUNDER.

SIR ARTHUR LYLE was a county dignity, and somewhat fond of showing it. It is true he could not compete with the old blood of the land, or contest place with an O'Neil or an O'Hara ; but his wealth gave him a special power, and it was a power that all could appreciate. There was no mistake about one who could head a subscription by a hundred pounds, or write himself patron of a school or an hospital with a thousand ! And then his house was more splendid, his servants more numerous, their liveries finer, his horses better, than his neighbours ; and he was not above making these advantages apparent. Perhaps his Indian experiences may have influenced his leanings, and taught him to place a higher value on show and all the details of external greatness. On everything that savoured of a public occasion, he came with all the pomp and parade of

a sovereign. A meeting of poor-law guardians, a committee of the county infirmary, a board of railway directors, were all events to be signalised by his splendid appearance.

His coach and four, and his outriders—for he had outriders—were admirable in all their appointments. Royalty could not have swung upon more perfectly balanced nor easier springs, nor could a royal team have beat the earth with a grander action or more measured rhythm. The harness—bating the excess of splendour—was perfect. It was massive and well-fitting. As for the servants, a master of the horse could not have detected an inaccurate fold in their cravats, nor a crease in their silk stockings. Let the world be as critical or slighting as it may, these things are successes. They are trifles only to him who has not attempted them. Neither is it true to say that money can command them, for there is much in them that mere money cannot do. There is a keeping in all details—a certain “tone” throughout, and, above all, a discipline, the least flaw in which would convert a solemn display into a mockery.

Neighbours might criticise the propriety or canvass the taste of so much ostentation, but none, not the most sarcastic or scrutinising, could say one

word against the display itself; and so, when on a certain forenoon the dense crowd of the market-place scattered and fled right and left to make way for the prancing leaders of that haughty equipage, the sense of admiration overcame even the unpleasant feeling of inferiority, and that funkeyism that has its hold on humanity felt a sort of honour in being hunted away by such magnificence.

Through the large square—or Diamond, as the northerns love to call it—of the town they came, upsetting apple-stalls and crockery-booths, and frightening old peasant women, who, with a goose under one arm and a hank of yarn under the other, were bent on enterprises of barter and commerce. Sir Arthur drove up to the bank, of which he was the governor, and on whose steps, to receive him, now stood the other members of the board. With his massive gold watch in hand, he announced that the fourteen miles had been done in an hour and sixteen minutes, and pointed to the glossy team, whose swollen veins stood out like whip-cord, to prove that there was no distress to the cattle. The board chorussed assent, and one—doubtless an ambitious man—actually passed his hand down the back sinews of a wheeler, and said: “Cool as spring-water, I pledge my honour.” Sir Arthur smiled

benignly, looked up at the sky, gave an approving look at the sun as though to say, Not bad for Ireland—and entered the bank.

It was about five o'clock in the same evening when the great man again appeared at the same place ; he was flushed and weary-looking. Some rebellious spirits—is not the world full of them ?—had dared to oppose one of his ordinances. They had ventured to question some subsidy that he would accord, or refuse, to some local line of railroad. The opposition had deeply offended him ; and though he had crushed it, it had wounded him. He was himself the bank !—its high repute, its great credit, its large connection, were all of his making ; and that same Mr M'Candlish who had dared to oppose him, was a creature of his own—that is, he had made him a tithe-valuator, or a road-inspector, or a stamp-distributor, or a something or other of the hundred petty places which he distributed just as the monks of old gave alms at the gates of their convents.

Sir Arthur whispered a word to Mr Boyd, the secretary, as he passed down-stairs. “How does M'Candlish stand with the bank ? He has had advances lately—send me a note of them.” And thus bent on reprisals, he stood waiting for that.

gorgeous equipage which was now standing fully ready in the inn yard, while the coachman was discussing a chop and a pot of porter. "Why is not he ready?" asked Sir Arthur, impatiently.

"He was getting a nail in Blenheim's off fore-shoe, sir," was the ready reply; and as Blenheim was a blood bay sixteen-three, and worth two hundred and fifty pounds, there was no more to be said; and so Sir Arthur saw the rest of the board depart on jaunting-cars, gigs, or dog-carts as it might be—humble men with humble conveyances, that could take them to their homes without the delays that wait upon greatness.

"Anything new stirring, Boyd?" asked Sir Arthur, trying not to show that he was waiting for the pleasure of his coachman.

"No, sir; all dull as ditch-water."

"We want rain, I fancy—don't we?"

"We'd not be worse for a little, sir. The after-grass, at least, would benefit by it."

"Why don't you pave this town better, Boyd? I'm certain it was these rascally stones twisted Blenheim's shoe."

"Our corporation will do nothing, sir—nothing," said the other, in a whisper.

"Who is that fellow with the large whiskers,

yonder—on the steps of the hotel ? He looks as if he owned the town.”

“A foreigner, Sir Arthur; a Frenchman or a German, I believe. He came over this morning to ask if we knew the address of Mr Norman Maitland.”

“Count Caffarelli,” muttered Sir Arthur to himself—“what a chance that I should see him ! How did he come ?”

“Posted, sir ; slept at Cookstown last night, and came here to breakfast.”

Though the figure of the illustrious stranger was very far from what Sir Arthur was led to expect, he knew that personal appearance was not so distinctive abroad as in England, and so he began to con over to himself what words of French he could muster, to make his advances. Now, had it been Hindostanee that was required, Sir Arthur would have opened his negotiations with all the florid elegance that could be wished ; but French was a tongue in which he had never been a proficient, and, in his ordinary life, had little need of. He thought, however, that his magnificent carriage and splendid horses would help him out of the blunders of declensions and genders, and that what he wanted in grammar he could make up in greatness. “Follow

me to M'Grotty's," said he to his coachman, and took the way across the square.

Major M'Caskey—for it was no other than that distinguished gentleman—was standing with both hands in the pockets of a very short shooting-jacket, and a clay pipe in his mouth, as Sir Arthur, courteously uncovering, bowed his way up the steps, saying something in which "l'honneur," "la félicité," and "infiniment flatté," floated amidst a number of less intelligibly rendered syllables, ending the whole with "Ami de mon ami, M. Norman Maitland."

Major M'Caskey raised his hat straight above his head and replaced it, listening calmly to the embarrassed attempts of the other, and then coldly replied in French, "I have the honour to be the friend of M. Maitland—How and when can I see him?"

"If you will condescend to be my guest, and allow me to offer you a seat with me to Lyle Abbey, you will see your friend." And, as Sir Arthur spoke, he pointed to his carriage.

"Ah, and this is yours? Pardie! it's remarkably well done. I accept at once. Fetch down my portmanteau and the pistol-case," said he to a small, ill-looking boy in a shabby green livery, and to whom he spoke in a whisper; while turning to Sir Arthur, he resumed his French. "This I call a

real piece of good-fortune—I was just saying to myself, Here I am; and though he says, Come! how are we to meet?"

"But you knew, Count, that we were expecting you."

"Nothing of the kind. All I knew was his message, 'Come here.' I had no anticipation of such pleasant quarters as you promise me."

Seated in the post of honour on the right of Sir Arthur, the Major, by way of completing the measure of his enjoyments, asked leave to smoke. The permission was courteously accorded, and away they rolled over the smooth highway to the pleasant measure of that stirring music—the trot of four spanking horses.

Two—three—four efforts did Sir Arthur make at conversation, but they all ended in sad failure. He wanted to say something about the crops, but he did not remember the French for "oats;" he wished to speak of the road, but he knew not the phrase for Grand Jury; he desired to make some apology for a backward season, but he might as well have attempted to write a Greek ode, and so he sat and smiled and waved his hand, pointing out objects of interest, and interjectionally jerking out, "Bons—braves—très braves—but poor—pauvres—

très pauvres—light soil—légère, you understand,” and with a vigorous hem, satisfied himself that he had said something intelligible. After this no more attempts at conversation were made, for the Major had quietly set his companion down for an intense bore, and fell back upon his tobacco for solace.

“*Là!*” cried the Baronet, after a long silence—and he pointed with his finger to a tall tower, over which a large flag was waving, about half a mile away—“*Là! Notre château—Lyle Abbey—moi;*” and he tapped his breast to indicate the personal interest that attached to the spot.

“*Je vous en fais mes compliments,*” cried M’Caskey, who chuckled at the idea of such quarters, and very eloquently went on to express the infinite delight it gave him to cultivate relations with a family at once so amiable and so distinguished. The happy hazard which brought him was in reality another tie that bound him to the friendship of that “*cher Maitland.*” Delivered of this, the Major emptied his pipe, replaced it in its case, and then, taking off his hat, ran his hands through his hair, arranged his shirt-collar, and made two or three other efforts at an improvised toilette.

“We are late—*en retard—I think,*” said Sir

Arthur, as they drew up at the door, where two sprucely-dressed servants stood to receive them. "We dine—at eight—eight," said he, pointing to that figure on his watch. "You'll have only time to dress—dress;" and he touched the lappet of his coat, for he was fairly driven to pantomime to express himself. "Hailes," cried he to a servant in discreet black, "show the Count to his room, and attend to him; his own man has not come on, it seems." And then, with many bows, and smiles, and courteous gestures, consigned his distinguished guest to the care of Mr Hailes, and walked hurriedly up-stairs to his own room.

"Such a day as I have had," cried he, as he entered the dressing-room, where Lady Lyle was seated with a French novel. "Those fellows at the Bank, led on by that creature M'Candlish, had the insolence to move an amendment to that motion of mine about the drainage loan. I almost thought they'd have given me a fit of apoplexy; but I crushed them: and I told Boyd, 'If I see any more of this, I don't care from what quarter it comes—if these insolences be repeated—I'll resign the direction. It's no use making excuses, pleading that you misunderstood this or mistook that, Boyd,' said I. 'If it occurs again, I go.' And then, as if this

was not enough, I've had to talk French all the way out. By the way, where's Maitland?"

"Talk French! what do you mean by that?"

"Where's Maitland, I say?"

"He's gone off with Mark to Larne. They said they'd not be back to dinner."

"Here's more of it; we shall have this foreign fellow on our hands till he comes—this Italian Count. I found him at M'Grotty's, and brought him back with me."

"And what is he like? is he as captivating as his portrait bespeaks?"

"He is, to my mind, as vulgar a dog as ever I met: he smoked beside me all the road, though he saw how his vile tobacco set me a-coughing; and he stretched his legs over the front seat of the carriage, where, I promise you, his boots have left their impress on the silk lining; and he poked his cane at Crattle's wig, and made some impertinent remark which I couldn't catch. I never was very enthusiastic about foreigners, and the present specimen has not made a convert of me."

"Maitland likes him," said she, languidly.

"Well, then, it is an excellent reason not to like Maitland. There's the second hell already. By the way, this Count, I suppose, takes you in to dinner?"

"I suppose so, and it is very unpleasant, for I am out of the habit of talking French. I'll make Alice sit on the other side of him and entertain him."

The news that the distinguished Italian friend of Mr Norman Maitland had arrived, created a sort of sensation in the house, and as the guests dropped into the drawing-room before dinner there was no other topic than the Count. The door at last opened for his *entrée*; and he came in unannounced, the servant being probably unable to catch the name he gave. In the absence of her father and mother, Mrs Trafford did the honours, and received him most courteously, presenting the other guests to him, or him to them, as it might be. When it came to the turn of the Commodore, he started, and muttered, "Eh, very like, the born image of him!" and colouring deeply at his own awkwardness, mumbled out a few unmeaning commonplaces. As for the Major, he eyed him with one of his steadiest stares—unflinching, unblenching; and even said to Mrs Trafford in a whisper, "I didn't catch the name; was it Green you said?" Seated between Lady Lyle and Mrs Trafford, M'Caskey felt that he was the honoured guest of the evening: Maitland's absence, so feelingly deplored by the others, gave

him little regret; indeed, instinct told him that they were not men to like each other, and he was all the happier that he had the field for a while his own. It was not a very easy task to be the pleasant man of an Irish country-house, in a foreign tongue; but, if any man could have success, it was M'Caskey. The incessant play of his features, the varied tones of his voice, his extraordinary gestures, appealed to those who could not follow his words, and led them very often to join in the laughter which his sallies provoked from others. He was, it is true, the exact opposite to all they had been led to expect—he was neither well-looking, nor distinguished, nor conciliatory in manner—there was not a trace of that insinuating softness and gentleness Maitland had spoken of—he was, even to those who could not follow his speech, one of the most coolly unabashed fellows they had ever met, and made himself at home with a readiness that said much more for his boldness than for his breeding; and yet, withal, each was pleased in turn to see how he out-talked some heretofore tyrant of conversation, how impudently he interrupted a bore, and how mercilessly he pursued an antagonist whom he had vanquished. It is not at all improbable, too, that he owed something of his

success to that unconquerable objection people feel at confessing that they do not understand a foreign language—the more when that language is such a cognate one as French. What a deal of ecstasy does not the polite world expend upon German drama and Italian tragedy, and how frequently are people moved to every imaginable emotion, without the slightest clue to the intention of the charmer! If he was great at the dinner-table, he was greater in the drawing-room. Scarcely was coffee served than he was twanking away with a guitar, and singing a Spanish muleteer song, with a jingling imitation of bells for the accompaniment; or seated at the piano he carolled out a French canzonette descriptive of soldier life, far more picturesque than it was proper; and all this time there was the old Commodore cruising above and below him, eyeing and watching him—growing perfectly feverish with the anxiety of his doubts, and yet unable to confirm or refute them. It was a suspicious craft; he felt that he had seen it before, and knew the rig well, and yet he was afraid to board and say, “Let me look at your papers.”

“I say, Beck, just go slyly up and say something accidentally, about Barbadoes; don’t ask any questions, but remark that the evening is close, or the

sky threatening, or the air oppressive, just as it used to be before a tornado there." The old sailor watched her, as he might have watched a boat party on a cutting-out expedition ; he saw her draw nigh the piano ; he thought he could trace all the ingenious steps by which she neared her object ; and he was convinced that she had at last thrown the shell on board him ; but what was his grievous disappointment, as he saw that the little fellow had turned to her with a look of warmest admiration, and actually addressed a very ardent love-song to the eyes that were then bent upon him. The Commodore made signals to cease firing and fall back, but in vain. She was too deeply engaged to think of orders ; and there she stood to be admired, and worshipped, and adored, in all the moods and tenses of a French "romance." But Miss Rebecca Graham was not the only victim of the Major's captivations ; gradually the whole company of the drawing-room had gathered round the piano, some to wonder, some to laugh at, some to feel amused by, and not a few to feel angry with, that little fiery-eyed impudent-looking fellow, who eyed the ladies so languishingly, and stared at the men as if asking, "Who'll quarrel with me ?" You might not like, but it was impossible to ignore him. There was,

too, in his whole air and bearing a conscious sense of power—a sort of bold self-reliance—that dignifies even impudence; and as he sat in his chair with head up and hands vigorously striking the chords of the piano, he looked, as it is by no means improbable that he felt, “M’Caskey against the field.” It was in the midst of hearty applause at a song he had just completed, that Maitland entered the room. In the hall he had learned from the servants that his foreign friend had arrived, and he hurried forward to greet him. Rather puzzled at the vociferous gaiety of the company, he made his way through the crowd and approached the piano, and then stood, staring on every side, to find out his friend. Though he saw the Major, his eye only rested passingly on him, as it ranged eagerly to catch the features of another.

“He’s very amusing, though not in the least what you led us to expect,” whispered Mrs Trafford.

“Who is it of whom you are speaking?”

“Your friend yonder, the Count Caffarelli.”

“What—that man?” cried Maitland, as he grew pale with passion; and now pushing forward, he leaned over the back of the music-stool, and whispered, “Who are you that call yourself Count Caffarelli?”

"Is your name Maitland?" said the other, with perfect coolness.

"Yes."

"Mine is M'Caskey, sir."

"And by what presumption do I find you here?"

"This is not the place nor the moment for explanations; but if you want or prefer exposures, don't baulk your fancy; I'm as ready as you are."

Maitland reeled back as if from a blow, and looked positively ill; and then laughingly turning to the company, he said some commonplace words about his ill luck in being late to hear the last song.

"Well, it must be the last for to-night," said Mr M'Caskey, rising. "I have really imposed too much upon every one's forbearance."

After a little of the usual skirmishing—the entreaties and the coy refusals—the recollection of that charming thing you sang for us at Woodpark—and the doubts lest they had brought no music with them—the Misses Graham sat down to one of those duets which every one in England seems able to compose and to sing; lackadaisical ditties adapted to the humblest musical proficiency, and unfortunately, too, the very narrowest intelligences. While the remainder of the company, after

a brief moment of silence, resumed conversation, Major M'Caskey stepped unobserved from the room —by all, at least, but by Maitland, who speedily followed him, and, led by the sound of his footsteps along the corridor, tracked him through the great hall. M'Caskey was standing on the lawn, and in the act of lighting his cigar, as Maitland came up.

“Explain this intrusion here, sir, now, if you can,” cried Maitland, as he walked straight towards him.

“If you want any explanations from me, you'll have to ask for them more suitably,” said the other, coldly.

“I desire to know, under what pretence you assume a name and rank you have no right to, to obtain admission to this house?”

“Your question is easily answered: your instructions to me were, on my arrival at Coleraine, to give myself out for a foreigner, and not to speak English with any one. I have your note in my desk, and think there can be no mistake about its meaning.”

“Well, well; I know all that; go on,” cried Maitland, impatiently.

M'Caskey smiled, half-insolently, at this show of temper, and continued: “It was, then, in my assumed character of Frenchman, Spaniard, Italian, or

whatever you wish—for they are pretty much alike to me—I was standing at the door of the inn, when a rather pompous old fellow with two footmen after him came up, and, in some execrable French, endeavoured to accost me, mingling your name in his jargon, and inviting me, as well as his language would permit, to return with him to his house. What was I to conclude but that the arrangement was yours? indeed, I never gave a doubt to it."

"When he addressed you as the Count Caffarelli, you might have had such a doubt," said Maitland, sneeringly.

"He called me simply Count," was the reply.

"Well; so far well: there was no assumption of a name, at least."

"None whatever; and if there had been, would the offence have seemed to you so very—very unpardonable?" It is not easy to convey the intense impertinence given to the delivery of this speech by the graduated slowness of every word, and the insolent composure with which it was spoken.

"What do you mean, sir, by this—this insinuation?" cried Maitland.

"Insinuation!—it's none. It is a mere question as to a matter of good taste or good morals."

"I have no time for such discussions, sir," said

Maitland, hotly. "I am glad to find that the blunder by which you came here was not of your own provoking, though I cannot see how it makes the explanation less difficult to myself."

"What is your difficulty, may I ask?" cried M'Caskey, coolly.

"Is it no difficulty that I must explain 'how I know——'" and he stopped suddenly, just as a man might stop on the verge of a precipice, and look horror-struck down into the depth below him. "I mean," said he, recovering himself, "that to enter upon the question of our relations to each other would open the discussion of matters essentially secret. When I have said I know you, the next question will be, 'Who is he?'"

"Well, what is the difficulty there? I am Graf M'Caskey, in Bavaria; Count of Serra-major, in Sicily; Commander of the Order of St Peter and St Paul, and a Knight of Malta. I mention these, for I have the 'brevets' with me."

"Very true," said Maitland; "but you are also the same Lieutenant Miles M'Caskey who served in the 2d West Indian Regiment, and who left a few unsettled matters between him and the government there, when he quitted Barbadoes."

"And which they won't rake up, I promise you,

if they don't want to hang an ex-governor," said he, laughing. "But none of us, Mr Maitland, will stand such investigations as these. There's a statute of limitations for morals as well as for small debts."

Maitland winced under the insolent look of the other, and, in a tone somewhat shaken, continued: "At all events, it will not suit me to open these inquiries. The only piece of good-fortune in the whole is, that there was none here who knew you."

"I am not so very sure of that, though," said the Major, with a quiet laugh.

"How so? what do you mean?"

"Why, that there is an old fellow whom I remember to have met on the West Indian station; he was a lieutenant, I think, on board the Dwarf, and he looked as if he were puzzled about me."

"Gambier Graham?"

"That's the man; he followed me about all night, till some one carried him off to play cribbage; but he'd leave his game every now and then to come and stare at me, till I gave him a look that said, If you do that again, we'll have a talk over it in the morning."

"To prevent which you must leave this to-night, sir," said Maitland. "I am not in the habit of car-

rying followers about with me to the country-houses where I visit."

A very prolonged whistle was M'Caskey's first reply to this speech, and then he said, "They told me you were one of the cleverest fellows in Europe, but I don't believe a word of it; for if you were, you would never try to play the game of bully with a man of my stamp. Bigger men than Mr Norman Maitland have tried that, and didn't come so well out of it!"

An insolent toss of the head, as he threw away his cigar, was all Maitland's answer. At last he said, "I suppose, sir, you cannot wish to drive me to say that I do not know you?"

"It would be awkward, certainly; for then I'd be obliged to declare that I *do* know you."

Instantly Maitland seized the other's arm; but M'Caskey, though not by any means so strong a man, flung off the grasp, and started back, saying, "Hands off, or I'll put a bullet through you. We've both of us lived long enough amongst foreigners to know that these are liberties that cost blood."

"This is very silly and very unprofitable," said Maitland, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "There ought not, there cannot be, any quarrel between you and me. Though it is no fault of yours that

this blunder has occurred, the mistake has its unpleasant side, and may lead to some embarrassment, the more as this old sea-captain is sure to remember you if you meet again. There's only one thing for it, therefore—get away as fast as you can. I'll supply the pretext, and show Sir Arthur in confidence how the whole affair occurred."

M'Caskey shook his head dubiously. "This is not to my liking, sir ; it smacks of a very ignominious mode of retreat. I am to leave myself to be discussed by a number of perhaps not over-favourable critics, and defended by one who even shrinks from saying he knows me. No, no ; I can't do this."

"But, remember you are not the person to whom these people meant to offer their hospitality."

"I am Major Miles M'Caskey," said he, drawing himself up to the full height of his five feet four inches ; "and there is no mistake whatever in any consideration that is shown to the man who owns that name."

"Yes, but why are you here—how have you come?"

"I came by the host's invitation, and I look to you to explain how the blunder occurred, and to recognise me afterwards. That is what I expect, and what I insist on."

"And if your old friend the Commodore, whose

memory for ugly anecdotes seems inexhaustible, comes out with any unpleasant reminiscences of West Indian life——”

“Leave that to me, Mr Norman Maitland. I'll take care to see my friend, as you call him, and I'll offer you a trifling wager he'll not be a whit more anxious to claim my acquaintance than you are.”

“You appear to have no small reliance on your powers of intimidation, Major,” said Maitland, with a sneering smile.

“They have never failed me, for I have always backed them with a very steady hand and a correct eye, both of which are much at your service.”

Maitland lifted his hat, and bowed an acknowledgment.

“I think we are losing our time, each of us, Major McCaskey. There need be no question of etiquette here. You are, if I understand the matter aright, under my orders. Well, sir, these orders are, that you now start for Castle Durrow, and be prepared by Tuesday next to make me a full report of your proceedings, and produce for me, if necessary, the men you have engaged.”

The change effected in the Major's manner at these words was magical; he touched his hat in salute, and listened with all show of respect.

"It is my intention, if satisfied with your report, to recommend you for the command of the legion, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel," continued Maitland; "and I have already written about those advances you mentioned."

"I'll take care that you are satisfied with me," said M'Caskey, respectfully; "I'll start within half an hour."

"This is all as it should be. I hope it is our first and last misunderstanding;" and he held out his hand frankly, which the other grasped and shook cordially. "How are you off for ready cash? Treat me as a comrade, and say freely."

"Not over flush, but I suppose I can rub on," said the Major, with some confusion.

"I have some thirty sovereigns here," said Maitland; "take them, and we'll settle all when we meet."

M'Caskey put the purse in his pocket, and, with the uneasy consciousness of a man ashamed of what he was doing, muttered out a few unmeaning words of thanks, and said, "Good-bye!"

"These condottieri rascals have been troublesome fellows in all ages," said Maitland, as he smoked away alone; "and I suspect they are especially unsuited to our present-day life and its habits. I must rid myself of the Major."

C H A P T E R XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

By the time Maitland had despatched his man Fenton to meet Count Caffarelli, and prevent his coming to Lyle Abbey, where his presence would be sure to occasion much embarrassment, the company had retired to their rooms, and all was quiet.

Though Mark was curious to know why and how Maitland had disappeared with his foreign friend, he had grown tired thinking over it, and fallen sound asleep. Nor did he hear Maitland as he entered the room and drew nigh his bedside.

“ What’s wrong — what has happened ? ” cried Mark, as he started up suddenly on his bed.

“ Nothing very serious, but still something worth waking you for ; but are you sure you are awake ? ”

“ Yes, yes, perfectly. What is it all about ? Who are in it ? ”

“ We are all in it, for the matter of that,” said

Maitland, with a quiet laugh. "Try and listen to me attentively for a couple of minutes. The man your father brought back with him from Coleraine, believing him to be my friend Caffarelli, was not Caffarelli at all!"

"What! And he pretended to be?"

"No such thing; hear me out. Your father spoke to him in French; and finding out—I don't exactly know how—that he and I were acquaintances, rushed at once to the conclusion that he must be Caffarelli. I conclude that the interview was not made more intelligible to either party by being carried on in French; but the invitation so frankly given was as freely accepted. The stranger came, dined, and was here in the drawing-room when we came back."

"This is unpardonable. Who is he? What is he?"

"He is a gentleman, I believe, as well born as either of us. I know something—not much—about him, but there are circumstances which, in a manner, prevent me from talking of him. He came down to this part of the world to see me, though I never intended it should have been here."

"Then his intrusion here was not sanctioned by you?"

“No. It was all your father’s doing.”

“My father’s doing, if you like, Maitland, but concurred in and abetted by this man, whoever he is.”

“I’ll not even say that; he assures me that he accepted the invitation in the belief that the arrangement was made by me.”

“And you accept that explanation?”

“Of course I do. I see nothing in it in the smallest degree improbable or unlikely.”

“Well, who is he? That is the main point; for it is clear you do not wish us to receive him as a friend of yours.”

“I say I’d not have presented him here, certainly; but I’ll not go the length of saying he couldn’t have been known by any one in this house. He is one of those adventurous fellows whose lives must not be read with the same glasses as those of quieter people. He has knocked about the world for some five-and-twenty years, without apparently having found his corner in it yet. I wanted him—what for, I shall probably tell you one of these days—and some friends of mine found him out for me!”

“One of your mysteries, Maitland,” said Mark, laughing.

“Yes, one of my mysteries!”

“Of what nation is he?”

"There, again, I must baulk your curiosity. The fact is, Mark, I can explain nothing about this man without going into matters which I am solemnly bound not to reveal. What I have to ask from you is, that you will explain to your father, and of course to Lady Lyle and your sisters, the mistake that has occurred, and request that they will keep it a secret. He has already gone, so that your guests will probably not discuss him after a day or two."

"Not even so much, for there's a break-up. Old Mrs Maxwell has suddenly discovered that her birthday will fall on next Friday, and she insists upon going back to Tilney Park to entertain the tenantry, and give a ball to the servants. Most of the people here accompany her, and Isabella and myself are obliged to go. Each of us expects to be her heir, and we have to keep out competitors at all hazards."

"Why has she never thought of me?" said Maitland.

"She means to invite you, at all events; for I heard her consulting my mother how so formidable a personage should be approached — whether she ought to address you in a despatch, or ask for a conference."

"If a choice be given me, I'll stay where I am.

The three days I promised you have grown nearer to three weeks, and I do not see the remotest chance of your getting rid of me."

"Will you promise me to stay till I tell you we want your rooms?"

"Ah, my dear fellow, you don't know—you couldn't know—what very tempting words you are uttering. This is such a charming, charming spot, to compose that novel I am—not—writing—that I never mean to leave till I have finished it; but, seriously speaking, like an old friend, am I a bore here? am I occupying the place that is wanted for another? are they tired of me?"

Mark overwhelmed his friend with assurances very honest in the main, that they were only too happy to possess him as their guest, and felt no common pride in the fact that he could find his life there endurable. "I will own now," says he, "that there was a considerable awe of you felt before you came, but you have lived down the fear, and become a positive favourite."

"But who could have given such a version of me as to inspire this?"

"I am afraid I was the culprit," said Mark; "I was rather boastful about knowing you at all, and I suppose I frightened them."

“ My dear Lyle, what a narrow escape I had of being positively odious ! and I now see with what consummate courtesy my caprices have been treated, when really I never so much as suspected they had been noticed.” There was a touch of sincerity in his accent as he spoke, that vouched for the honesty of his meaning ; and Mark, as he looked at him, muttered to himself, “ This is the man they call an egotist, and who is only intent on taking his turn out of all around him.”

“ I think I must let you go to sleep again, Mark,” said Maitland, rising. “ I am a wretched sleeper myself, and quite forget that there are happy fellows who can take their ten hours of oblivion without any help from the druggist. Without this”—and he drew a small phial from his waistcoat-pocket,—“ I get no rest.”

“ What a bad habit!”

“ Isn’t almost everything we do a bad habit ? Have we ever a humour that recurs to us, that is not a bad habit ? Are not the simple things which mean nothing in themselves, an evil influence when they grow into requirements and make slaves of us ? I suppose it was a bad habit that made me a bad sleeper, and I turn to another bad habit to correct it. The only things which are positively bad habits

are those that require an effort to sustain, or will break down under us without we struggle to support them. To be morose is not one jot a worse habit than to be agreeable ; for the time will come when you are indisposed to be pleasant, and the company in which you find yourself are certain to deem the humour as an offence to themselves ; but there is a worse habit than this, which is to go on talking to a man whose eyes are closing with sleep. Good-night."

Maitland said no more than the truth when he declared how happy he found himself in that quiet unmolested existence which he led at Lyle Abbey. To be free in every way—to indulge his humour to be alone or in company—to go and come as he liked, were great boons ; but they were even less than the enjoyment he felt in living amongst total strangers—persons who had never known, never heard of him—for whom he was not called on to make any effort, or support any character. No man ever felt more acutely the slavery that comes of sustaining a part before the world, and being as strange and as inexplicable as people required he should be. While a very young man, it amused him to trifle in this fashion, and to set absurd modes afloat for imitation ; and he took a certain

spiteful pleasure in seeing what a host of followers mere eccentricity could command. As he grew older he wearied of this, and, to be free of it, wandered away to distant and unvisited countries, trying the old and barren experiment whether new sensations might not make a new nature. “*Cælum non animum mutant,*” says the adage, and he came back pretty much as he went, with this only difference, that he now cared only for quietness and repose. Not the contemplative repose of one who sought to reflect without disturbance, so much as the peaceful isolation that suited indolence. He fancied how he would have liked to be the son of that house, and dream away life in that wild secluded spot; but, after all, the thought was like the epicure’s notion of how contented he could be with a meal of potatoes!

As the day broke, he was roused from his light sleep by the tumult and noise of the departing guests. He arose and watched them through the half-closed jalousies. It was picturesque enough, in that crisp, fresh, frosty air, to see the groups as they gathered on the long terrace before the door; while equipages the most varied drew up—here a family-coach with long-tailed “blacks;” there a smart britschka, with spanking greys; a tandem

too, there was for Mark's special handling; and conspicuous by its pile of luggage in the "well," stood Gambier Graham's outside jaunting-car—a large basket of vegetables and fruit, and a hamper of lobsters, showing how such guests are propitiated, even in the hours of leave-taking.

Maitland watched Isabella in all her little attentive cares to Mrs Maxwell, and saw, as he thought, the heir-expectant in every movement. He fancied that the shawl she carried on her arm was the old lady's, and was almost vexed when he saw her wrap it around her own shoulders. "Well, that at least is sycophancy," muttered he, as he saw her clutch up a little white Maltese terrier and kiss it; but alas for his prescience! the next moment she had given the dog to a servant to carry back into the house, and so it was her own that she was parting from, and not Mrs Maxwell's that she was caressing!

It is strange to say that he was vexed at being disappointed. She was very pretty, very well-mannered, and very pleasing; but he longed to find that all the charm and grace about her were conventional; he wished to believe that "the whole thing," as he called life, was a mere trick, where all cheated in proportion to their capacities. Mark had been

honest enough to own that they were fortune-hunting, and Isabella certainly could not be ignorant of the stake she played for.

One by one the carriages drew up and moved away, and now Gambier Graham's car stood before the door, alone; for the crowd of footmen who had thronged to press their services on the others, gradually melted away, hopeless of exacting a black-mail from the old Commodore. While Maitland stood watching the driver, who, in a composite sort of costume rather more gardener than coachman, amused himself flicking with his whip imaginary flies off the old mare's neck and withers, a smart tap came to the door, while a hasty voice called out, "May I come in?"

"Let me first hear who you are?" said Maitland. "Commodore Graham," was the answer.

In a moment it flashed across Maitland that the old sailor had come to reveal his discovery of McCaskey. Just as quickly did he decide that it was better to admit him, and, if possible, contrive to make the story seem a secret between themselves.

"Come in, by all means—the very man I wanted to see," said Maitland, as he opened the door, and gave him a cordial shake-hands. "I was afraid you were going without seeing me, Commodore; and,

early as it was, I got up and was dressing in hope to catch you."

"That I call hearty—downright hearty—Maitland."

Maitland actually started at this familiar mention of him by one whom he had never met till a few days before.

"Rather a rare event in your life to be up at this hour, I'll be sworn—except when you haven't been to bed, eh!" And he laughed heartily at what he fancied was a most witty conceit. "You see we're all off! We've had springs on our cables these last twenty-four hours, with this frolicsome old woman, who would insist on being back for her birthday; but she's rich, Maitland—immensely rich, and we all worship her!"

Maitland gave a faint shrug of the shoulders, as though he deplored the degeneracy, but couldn't help it.

"Yes, yes—I'm coming," cried the Commodore, shouting from the open window to his daughters beneath. "The girls are impatient, they want to be at Lesliesford when the others are crossing. There's a fresh on the river, and it's better to get some stout fellows to guide the carriages through the water. I wanted greatly to have five minutes

alone with you—five would do—half of it perhaps between men of the world, as we are. You know about what."

"I suspect I do," said Maitland, quietly.

"I saw, too," resumed Graham, "that you wished to have no talk about it here, amongst all these gossiping people. Wasn't I right?"

"Perfectly right; you appreciated me thoroughly."

"What I said was this,—Maitland knows the world well. He'll wait till he has his opportunity of talking the matter over with myself. He'll say, 'Graham and I will understand one another at once.' One minute, only one," screamed he out from the window. "Couldn't you come down and just say a word or two to them? They'd like it so much."

Maitland muttered something about his costume.

"Ah! there it is. You fellows will never be seen till you are in full fig. Well, I must be off. Now, then, to finish what we've been saying. You'll come over next week to Port-Graham—that's my little place, though there's no port, nor anything like a port, within ten miles of it—and we'll arrange everything. If I'm an old fellow, Maitland, I don't forget that I was once a young one—mind that, my boy." And the Commodore had to wipe his eyes, with the laughter at his drol-

lery. "Yes; here I am," cried he again; and then turning to Maitland, shook his hand in both his own, repeating, "On Wednesday—Wednesday to dinner—not later than five, remember"—he hastened down the stairs, and scrambled up on the car beside his eldest daughter, who, apparently, had already opened a flood-gate of attack on him for his delay.

"Insupportable old bore," muttered Maitland, as he waved his hand from the window, and smiled his blandest salutations to the retreating party. "What a tiresome old fool to fancy that I am going over to Graham-pond, or port, or whatever it is, to talk over an incident that I desire to have forgotten! Besides, when once I have left this neighbourhood, he may discuss M'Caskey every day after his dinner—he may write his life, for anything I care."

With this parting reflection he went down to the garden, strolling listlessly along the dew-spangled alleys, and carelessly tossing aside with his cane the apple-blossoms, which lay thick as snow-flakes on the walks. While thus lounging, he came suddenly upon Sir Arthur, as, hoe in hand, he imagined himself doing something useful.

"Oh, by the way, Mr Maitland," cried he, "Mark

has just told me of the stupid mistake I made. Will you be generous enough to forgive me?"

"It is from me, sir, that the apologies must come," began Maitland.

"Nothing of the kind, my dear Mr Maitland. You will overwhelm me with shame if you say so. Let us each forget the incident; and believe me, I shall feel myself your debtor by the act of oblivion." He shook Maitland's hand warmly, and, in an easier tone, added, "What good news I have heard! You are not tired of us—not going!"

"I cannot—I told Mark this morning—I don't believe there is a road out of this."

"Well, wait here till I tell you it is fit for travelling," said Sir Arthur, pleasantly, and addressed himself once more to his labours as a gardener.

Meanwhile Maitland threw himself down on a garden-bench, and cried aloud, "This is the real thing, after all—this is actual repose. Not a word of political intrigue, no snares, no tricks, no deceptions, and no defeats; no waking to hear of our friends arrested, and our private letters in the hands of a Police Prefect. No horrid memories of the night before, and that run of ill luck that has left us almost beggars. I wonder how long the charm of this tranquillity would endure, or is it like all other anodynes, which

lose their calming power by habit? I'd certainly like to try."

"Well, there is no reason why you shouldn't," said a voice from the back of the summer-house, which he knew to be Mrs Trafford's. He jumped up to overtake her, but she was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

MAITLAND'S VISIT.

“WHAT was it you were saying about flowers, Jeanie? I was not minding,” said Mrs Butler, as she sat at her window watching the long heaving roll of the sea, as it broke along the jagged and rugged shore, her thoughts the while far beyond it.

“I was saying, ma’am, that the same man that came with the books t’other day brought these roses, and asked very kindly how you were.”

“You mean the same gentleman, lassie, who left his card here?” said the old lady, correcting that very northern habit of ignoring all differences of condition.

“Well, I mind he was, for he had very white hands, and a big bright ring on one of his fingers.”

“You told him how sorry I was not to be able to see him—that these bad headaches have left me unable to receive any one?”

“Na! I didn’t say that,” said she, half-doggedly.

“Well, and what did you say?”

“I just said, She’s *thinkin’* too much about her son, who is away from home, to find any pleasure in a strange face. He laughed a little quiet laugh, and said, ‘There is good sense in that, Jeanie, and I’ll wait for a better moment.’”

“You should have given my message as I spoke it to you,” said the mistress, severely.

“I’m no sae blind that I canna see the differ between an aching head and a heavy heart. Ye’re just frettin’, and there’s naething else the matter wi’ you. There he goes now, the same man—the same gentleman, I mean,” said she, with a faint scoff. “He aye goes back by the strand, and climbs the white rocks opposite the Skerries.”

“Go and say that I’ll be happy to have a visit from him to-morrow, Jeanie; and mind put nothing of your own in it, lassie, but give my words as I speak them.”

With a toss of her head Jeanie left the room, and soon after was seen skipping lightly from rock to rock towards the beach beneath. To the old lady’s great surprise, however, Jeanie, instead of limiting herself to the simple words of her message, appeared to be talking away earnestly and fluently

with the stranger; and, worse than all, she now saw that he was coming back with her, and walking straight for the cottage. Mrs Butler had but time to change her cap and smooth down the braids of her snow-white hair, when the key turned in the lock, and Jeanie ushered in Mr Norman Maitland. Nothing could be more respectful or in better taste than Maitland's approach. He blended the greatest deference with an evident desire to make her acquaintance, and almost at once relieved her from what she so much dreaded—the first meeting with a stranger.

“Are you of the Clairlaverock Maitlands, sir?” asked she, timidly.

“Very distantly, I believe, madam. We all claim Sir Peter as the head of the family; but my own branch settled in India two generations back, and, I shame to say, thought of everything but genealogy.”

“There was a great beauty, a Miss Hester Maitland. When I was a girl she married a lord, I think?”

“Yes, she married a Viscount Kinross, a sort of cousin of her own; though I am little versed in family history. The truth is, madam, younger sons who had to work their way in the world were more anxious to bequeath habits of energy

and activity to their children than ideas of blazons and quarterings."

The old lady sighed at this, but it was a sigh of relief. She had been dreading not a little a meeting with one of those haughty Maitlands, associated in her childhood's days with thoughts of wealth and power, and that dominance that smacks of, if it does not mean, insolence; and now she found one who was not ashamed to belong to a father who had toiled for his support and worked hard for his livelihood. And yet it was strange with what tenacity she clung to a topic that had its terrors for her. She liked to talk of the family and high connections and great marriages of all these people with whose names she was familiar as a girl, but whom she had never known, if she had so much as seen.

"My poor husband, sir—you may have heard of him—Colonel Walter Butler, knew all these things by heart. You had only to ask when did so and so die, and who married such a one, and he'd tell you as if out of a book."

"I have heard of Colonel Butler, madam. His fame as a soldier is widespread in India—indeed, I had hoped to have made his son's acquaintance when I came here; but I believe he is with his regiment."

"No, sir, he's not in the service," said she, flushing.

"Ah! a civilian, then. Well, madam, the Butlers have shown capacity in all careers."

"My poor boy has not had the chance given him as yet, Mr Maitland. We were too poor to think of a profession; and so waiting and hoping, though it's not very clear for what, we let the time slip over, and there he is a great grown man! as fine a young fellow as you ever looked on, and as good as handsome, but yet he cannot do one hand's turn that would give him bread—and yet, ask your friends at the Abbey if there's a grace or gift of a gentleman he is not the master of."

"I think I know how the Lyles speak of him, and what affection they bear him."

"Many would condemn me, sir," cried she, warming with the one theme that engaged her whole heart, "for having thrown my boy amongst those so far above him in fortune, and given him habits and ways that his own condition must deny him; but it was my pride to see him in the station that his father held, and to know that he became it. I suppose there are dangers in it too," said she, rather answering his grave look than anything he had said. "I take it, sir, there are great temp-

tations, mayhap over-strong temptations, for young natures."

Maitland moved his head slightly, to imply that he assented.

"And it's not unlikely the poor boy felt that himself; for when he came home t'other night he looked scared and worn, and answered me shortly and abruptly in a way he never does, and made me sit down on the spot and write a letter for him to a great man who knew his father, asking—it is hard to say what I asked, and what I could have expected."

"Colonel Butler's son can scarcely want friends, madam," said Maitland, courteously.

"What the world calls friends are usually relatives, and we have but one who could pretend to any sort of influence, and his treatment of my poor husband debars us from all knowledge of him. He was an only brother, a certain Sir Omerod Butler. You may perhaps have heard of him?"

"Formerly British Minister at Naples, I think?"

"The same, sir: a person, they tell me, of great abilities, but very eccentric and peculiar—indeed, so his letters bespeak him."

"You have corresponded with him then, madam?"

"No, sir, never; but he wrote constantly to

my husband before our marriage. They were at that time greatly attached to each other; and the elder, Sir Omerod, was always planning and plotting for his brother's advancement. He talked of him as if he was his son, rather than a younger brother; in fact, there were eighteen years between them. Our marriage broke up all this. The great man was shocked at the humble connection, and poor Walter would not bear to have me slightly spoken of; but dear me, Mr Maitland, how I am running on! To talk of such things to you! I am really ashamed of myself. What will you think of me?"

"Only what I have learned to think of you, madam, from all your neighbours—with sentiments of deep respect and sincere interest."

"It is very good of you to say it, sir; and I wish Tony was back here to know you and thank you for all your attention to his mother."

"You are expecting him then?" asked he.

"Well, sir, I am, and I am not. One letter is full of hope and expectancy; by Thursday or Friday he's to have some tidings about this or that place; and then comes another, saying, how Sir Harry counsels him to go out and make friends with his uncle. All mammon, sir—nothing but

mammon ; just because this old man is very rich, and never was married."

" I suspect you are in error there, madam. Sir Omerod was married at least twenty years ago, when I first heard of him at Naples."

She shook her head doubtfully, and said, " I have always been told the reverse, sir. I know what you allude to, but I have reason to believe I am right, and there is no Lady Butler."

" It is curious enough, madam, that through a chance acquaintance on a railroad train, I learned all about the lady he married. She was an Italian."

" It's the same story I have heard myself, sir. We only differ about the ending of it. She was a stage-player, or a dancer."

" No, madam ; a very celebrated *prima donna*."

" Ay," said she, as though there was no discrepancy there. " I heard how the old fool—for he was no young man then—got smitten with her voice and her beauty, and made such a fuss about her, taking her here and there in his state coach, and giving great entertainments for her at the Embassy, where the arms of England were over the door ; and I have been told that the King heard of it, and wrote to Sir Omerod a fearful letter, asking how he dared so to degrade the escutcheon

of the great nation he represented. Ah, you may smile, sir." Maitland had indeed smiled alike at her tale and the energy with which she told it. " You may smile, sir; but it was no matter for laughter, I promise you. His Majesty called on him to resign, and the great Sir Omerod, who wouldn't know his own brother because he married a minister's daughter, fell from his high station for the sake of—I will not say any hard words; but she was not certainly superior in station to myself, and I will make no other comparison between us."

" I suspect you have been greatly misled about all this, madam," said Maitland, with a quiet grave manner. " Sir Omerod—I heard it from my travelling companion—took his retiring pension and quitted diplomacy the very day he was entitled to it. So far from desiring him to leave, it is said that the Minister of the day pressed him to remain at his post. He has the reputation of possessing no mean abilities, and certainly enjoyed the confidence of the Court to which he was accredited."

" I never heard so much good of him before; and to tell you the truth, Mr Maitland, if you had warned me that you were his friend, I'd scarcely

have been so eager to make your acquaintance."

"Remember, my dear madam, all I have been telling you reached myself as hearsay."

"Well, well," said she, sighing. "He's not over likely to trouble his head about me, and I don't see why I am to fash myself for him. Are you minded to stay much longer in this neighbourhood, Mr Maitland?" said she, to change the topic.

"I fear not, madam. I have overstayed everything here but the kindness of my hosts. I have affairs which call me abroad, and some two or three engagements, that I have run to the very last hour. Indeed, I will confess to you, I delayed here to meet your son."

"To meet Tony, sir?"

"Yes, madam. In my intercourse with the Lyles I have learned to know a great deal about him; to hear traits of his fine generous nature, his manly frankness, and his courage. These were the testimonies of witnesses who differed widely from each other in age and temperament, and yet they all concurred in saying he was a noble-hearted young fellow, who richly deserved all the fortune that could befall him."

"Oh dear, sir, these are sweet words to his poor

mother's ears. He is all that I have left me, and you cannot know how he makes up to me for want of station and means, and the fifty other things that people who are well-off look for. I do hope he'll come back before you leave this. I'd like to let you see I'm not over boastful about him."

"I have had a project in my head for some days back. Indeed, it was in pursuance of it I have been so persevering in my attempts to see you, madam. It occurred to me, from what Sir Arthur Lyle said of your son, that he was just the person I have long been looking out for—a man of good name and good blood, fresh to the world, neither hackneyed, on the one hand, nor awkwardly ignorant, on the other—well brought up and high-principled—a gentleman, in fact. It has long been a plan of mine to find one such as this, who, calling himself my secretary, would be in reality my companion and my friend—who would be content to share the fortunes of a somewhat wayward fellow for a year or two, till, using what little influence I possess, I could find means of effectually establishing him in life. Now, madam, I am very diffident about making such a proposal to one in every respect my equal, and, I have no doubt, more than my equal in some things; but if he were not my

equal, there would be an end to what I desire in the project. In fact, to make the mere difference of age the question of superiority between us, is my plan. We should live together precisely on the terms of equality. In return for that knowledge of life I could impart to him—what I know of the world, not acquired altogether without some sharp experience—he would repay me by that hearty and genial freshness which is the wealth of the young. Now, madam, I will not tire you with any more of my speculations, purely selfish as they are ; but will at once say, if, when your son and I meet, this notion of mine is to his taste, all the minor details of it shall not deter him. I know I am not offering a career, but it is yet the first step that will fit him for one. A young fellow, gifted as he is, will needs become, in a couple of years' intercourse with what is pre-eminently society, a man of consummate tact and ability. All that I know of life convinces me that the successful men are the ready-witted men. Of course I intend to satisfy you with respect to myself. You have a right to know the stability of the bank to which you are intrusting your deposit. At all events, think over my plan, and if nothing has already fallen to your son's hands in London, ask him to come back here and

talk it over with me. I can remain here for a week —that is, if I can hope to meet him."

The old lady listened with all attention and patience to this speech. She was pleased by the flattery of it. It was flattery, indeed, to hear that consummately fine gentleman declare that he was ready to accept Tony as his equal in all things, and it was more than flattery to fancy her dear boy mingling in the pleasures and fascinations of the great world, courted and admired, as she could imagine he would be; but there were still drawbacks to all these. The position was that of a dependant; and how would Tony figure in such a post? He was the finest tempered, most generous creature in the world, where no attempt to overbear interfered; but any show of offensive superiority would make a tiger of him.

"Well, well, thought she, it's not to be rejected all at once, and I'll just talk it over with the minister. "May I consult an old friend and neighbour of mine, sir, before I speak to Tony himself?" said she, timidly.

"By all means, madam; or, if you like it better, let me call on him, and enter more fully into my plan than I have ventured to do with you."

"No, thank you, sir. I'll just talk the matter

over with the Doctor, and I'll see what he says to it all. This seems a very ungracious way to meet your great kindness, sir; but I was thinking of what a while ago you called my deposit, and so it is—it's all the wealth I possess—and even the thought of resigning it is more than I can bear."

"I hope to convince you one of these days, madam, that you have not invested unprofitably;" and with many courteous assurances that, decide how she might, his desire to serve her should remain, he took his leave, bequeathing, as he passed out, a glow of hope to the poor widow's heart, not the less cheering that she could not freely justify nor even define it.

CHAPTER XIII.

TONY IN TOWN.

DAY followed day, and Tony Butler heard nothing from the minister. He went down each morning to Downing Street, and interrogated the austere door-keeper, till at length there grew up between that grim official and himself a state of feeling little short of hatred.

“No letter?” would say Tony.

“Look in the rack,” was the answer.

“Is this sort of thing usual?”

“What sort of thing?”

“The getting no reply for a week or eight days?”

“I should say it is very usual with certain people.”

“What do you mean by certain people?”

“Well, the people that don’t have answers to the letters, nor ain’t likely to have them.”

“Might I ask you another question?” said Tony,

lowering his voice, and fixing a very quiet but steady look on the other.

“Yes, if it’s a short one.”

“It’s a very short one. Has no one ever kicked you for your impertinence?”

“Kicked *me*—kicked *me*, sir!” cried the other, while his face became purple with passion.

“Yes,” resumed Tony, mildly; “for let me mention it to you in confidence, it’s the last thing I mean to do before I leave London.”

“We’ll see about this, sir, at once,” cried the porter, who rushed through the inner door, and tore up-stairs like a madman. Tony meanwhile brushed some dust off his coat with a stray clothes-brush near, and was turning to leave the spot, when Skeffington came hurriedly towards him, trying to smother a fit of laughter that would not be repressed.

“What’s all this, Butler?” said he. “Here’s the whole Office in commotion. Willis is up with the chief clerk and old Baynes telling them that you drew a revolver and threatened his life, and swore if you hadn’t an answer by to-morrow at twelve, you’d blow Sir Harry’s brains out.”

“It’s somewhat exaggerated. I had no revolver, and never had one. I don’t intend any violence

beyond kicking that fellow, and I'll not do even that if he can manage to be commonly civil."

"The Chief wishes to see this gentleman upstairs for a moment," said a pale, sickly youth to Skeffington.

"Don't get flurried. Be cool, Butler, and say nothing that can irritate—mind that," whispered Skeffington, and stole away.

Butler was introduced into a spacious room, partly office, partly library, at the fireplace of which stood two men, a short and a shorter. They were wonderfully alike in externals, being each heavy-looking, white-complexioned, serious men, with a sort of dreary severity of aspect, as if the spirit of domination had already begun to weigh down even themselves.

"We have been informed," began the shorter of the two, in a slow, deliberate voice, "that you have grossly outraged one of the inferior officers of this department; and although the case is one which demands, and shall have, the attention of the police authorities, we have sent for you—Mr Brand and I—to express our indignation,—eh, Brand?" added he, in a whisper.

"Certainly, our indignation," chimed in the other.

"And aware, as we are," resumed the Chief,

“that you are an applicant for employment under this department, to convey to you the assurance that such conduct as you have been guilty of, totally debars you—excludes you——”

“Yes, excludes you,” chimed in Brand.

“From the most remote prospect of an appointment!” said the first, taking up a book, and throwing it down with a slap on the table, as though the more emphatically to confirm his words.

“Who are you, may I ask, who pronounce so finally on my prospects?” cried Tony.

“Who are we—who are we?” said the Chief, in a horror at the query. “Will you tell him, Mr Brand?”

The other was, however, ringing violently at the bell, and did not hear the question.

“Have you sent to Scotland Yard?” asked he of the servant who came to his summons. “Tell Willis to be ready to accompany the officer, and make his charge.”

“The gentleman asks who we are!” said Baynes, with a feeble laugh.

“I ask in no sort of disrespect to you,” said Butler, “but simply to learn in what capacity I am to regard you. Are you magistrates? Is this a court?”

“No, sir, we are not magistrates,” said Brand; “we are Heads of Departments — departments which we shall take care do not include within their limits persons of your habits and pursuits.”

“You can know very little about my habits or pursuits. I promised your hall-porter I’d kick him, and I don’t suspect that either you or your little friend there would risk any interference to protect him.”

“My Lord!” said a messenger, in a voice of almost tremulous terror, while he flung open both inner and outer door for the great man’s approach. The person who entered with a quick active step, was an elderly man, white-whiskered and white-haired, but his figure well set up, and his hat rakishly placed a very little on one side; his features were acute, and betokened promptitude and decision, blended with a sort of jocular humour about the mouth, as though even state affairs did not entirely indispose a man to a jest.

“Don’t send that bag off to-night, Baynes, till I come down,” said he, hurriedly; “and if any telegrams arrive, send them over to the House. What’s this policeman doing at the door?—who is refractory?”

“This—young man,” he paused, for he had

almost said gentleman—"has just threatened an old and respectable servant of the Office with a personal chastisement, my Lord."

"Declared he'd break every bone in his body," chimed in Brand.

"Whose body?" asked his Lordship.

"Willis's, my Lord—the hall-porter—a man, if I mistake not, appointed by your Lordship."

"I said, I'd kick him," said Tony, calmly.

"Kick Willis?" said my Lord, with a forced gravity, which could not, however, suppress a laughing twinkle of his keen grey eyes—"kick Willis?"

"Yes, my Lord; he does not attempt to deny it."

"What's your name, sir?" asked my Lord.

"Butler," was the brief reply.

"The son of—no, not son—but relative of Sir Omerod's?" asked his Lordship again.

"His nephew."

"Why, Sir Harry Elphinstone has asked me for something for you. I don't see what I can do for you. It would be an admirable thing to have some one to kick the porters; but we haven't thought of such an appointment,—eh, Baynes? Willis, the very first; most impudent dog. We want a messenger for Bucharest, Brand, don't we?"

"No, my Lord; you filled it this morning—gave it to Mr Beed."

"Cancel Beed, then, and appoint Butler."

"Mr Beed has gone, my Lord—started with the Vienna bag."

"Make Butler supernumerary."

"There are four already, my Lord."

"I don't care if there were forty, Mr Brand! Go and pass your examination, young gentleman, and thank Sir Harry Elphinstone, for this nomination is at his request. I am only sorry you didn't kick Willis." And with this parting speech he turned away, and hopped down-stairs to his brougham, with the light step and jaunty air of a man of thirty.

Scarcely was the door closed, when Baynes and Brand retired into a window recess, conversing in lowest whispers, and with much head-shaking. To what a frightful condition the country must come—any country must come—when administered by men of such levity—who make a sport of its interests, and a practical joke of its patronage—was the theme over which they now mourned in common.

"Are you going to make a minute of this appointment, Brand?" asked Baynes. "I declare I'd not do it."

The other pursed up his lips and leaned his head to one side, as though to imply that such a course would be a bold one.

“Will you put his name on your list?”

“I don’t know,” muttered the other. “I suspect we can do it better. Where have you been educated, Mr Butler?”

“At home, principally.”

“Never at any public school?”

“Never, except you call a village school a public one.”

Brand’s eyes glistened, and Baynes’s returned the sparkle.

“Are you a proficient in French?”

“Far from it. I could spell out a fable, or a page of ‘Telemachus,’ and even that would push me hard.”

“Do you write a good hand?”

“It is legible, but it’s no beauty.”

“And your arithmetic?”

“Pretty much like my French—the less said about it the better.”

“I think that will do, Brand,” whispered Baynes.

The other nodded, and muttered, “Of course; and it is the best way to do it.”

“These are the points, Mr Butler,” he continued,

giving him a printed paper, "on which you will have to satisfy the Civil Service Commissioners; they are, as you see, not very numerous nor very difficult. A certificate as to general conduct and character—British subject—some knowledge of foreign languages—the first four rules of arithmetic—and that you are able to ride—"

"Thank Heaven, there is one thing I can do, and if you ask the Commissioners to take a cast 'cross country, I'll promise them a breather."

Tony never noticed—nor, had he noticed, had he cared for—the grave austerity of the heads of departments at this outburst of enthusiasm. He was too full of his own happiness, and too eager to share it with his mother.

As he gained the street, Skeffington passed his arm through his, and walked along with him, offering him his cordial gratulations, and giving him many wise and prudent counsels, though unfortunately, from the state of ignorance of Tony's mind, these latter were lamentably unprofitable. It was of "the Office" that he warned him—of its tempers, its caprices, its rancours, and its jealousies, till, lost in the maze of his confusion, poor Tony began to regard it as a beast of ill-omened and savage passions—a great monster, in fact, who lived on the

bones and flesh of ardent and high-hearted youths, drying up the springs of their existence, and exhausting their brains out of mere malevolence. Out of all the farrago that he listened to, all that he could collect was, "that he was one of those fellows that the chiefs always hated and invariably crushed." Why destiny should have marked him out for such odium—why he was born to be strangled by red tape, Tony could not guess, nor, to say truth, did he trouble himself to inquire; but, resisting a pressing invitation to dine with Skeffington at his club, he hastened to his room to write his good news to his mother.

"Think of my good fortune, dearest little mother," he wrote. "I have got a place, and such a place! You'd fancy it was made for me, for I have neither to talk, nor to think, nor to read, nor to write—all my requirements are joints that will bear bumping, and a head that will stand the racket of railroad and steamboat without any sense of confusion, beyond what nature implanted there. Was he not a wise minister who named me to a post where bones are better than brains, and a good digestion superior to intellect? I am to be a messenger—a Foreign Service Messenger is the grand title—

a creature to go over the whole globe with a white leather bag or two, full of mischief, or gossip, as it may be, and whose whole care is to consist in keeping his time, and being never out of health.

“They say in America the bears were made for Colonel Crocket’s dog, and I’m sure these places were made for fellows of my stamp—fellows to carry a message, and yet not intrusted with the telling it.

“The pay is capital, the position good—that is, three-fourths of the men are as good or better than myself; and the life, all tell me, is rare fun—you go everywhere, see everything, and think of nothing. In all your dreams for me, you never fancied the like of this. They talk of places for all sorts of capacities, but imagine a berth for one of no capacity at all! And yet, mother dear, they have made a blunder—and a very absurd blunder too, and no small one!—they have instituted a test—a sort of examination—for a career that ought to be tested by a round with the boxing-gloves, or a sharp canter over a course with some four-feet hurdles!

“I am to be examined, in about six weeks from this, in some foreign tongues, multiplication, and the state of my muscles. I am to show proof that

I was born of white parents, and am not too young or too old to go alone of a message. There's the whole of it. It ain't much, but it is quite enough to frighten one, and I go about with the verb *avoir* in my head, and the first four rules of arithmetic dance round me like so many furies. What a month of work and drudgery there is before *you*, little woman. You'll have to coach me through my declensions and subtractions. If you don't fag, you'll be plucked, for, as for me, I'll only be your representative whenever I go in. Look up your grammar then, and your history too, for they plucked a man the other day that said Piccolomini was not a General, but a little girl that sang in the 'Traviata'! I'd start by the mail this evening, but that I have to go up to the Office—no end of a chilling place—for my examination-papers, and to be tested by the doctor that I am all right, thews and sinews; but I'll get away by the afternoon, right glad to leave all this turmoil and confusion, the very noise of which makes me quarrelsome and ill-tempered.

"There is such a good fellow here, Skeffington—the Honourable Skeffington Damer, to speak of him more formally—who has been most kind to me. He is private secretary to Sir Harry, and told me

all manner of things about the Government offices, and the Dons that rule them. If I was a clever or a sharp fellow, I suppose this would have done me infinite service; but, as old Dr Kinward says, it was only 'putting the wine in a cracked bottle;' and all I can remember is the kindness that dictated the attention.

"Skeff is some relation—I forget what—to old Mrs Maxwell of Tilney, and, like all the world, expects to be her heir. He talks of coming over to see her when he gets his leave, and said—God forgive him for it—that he'd run down and pass a day with us. I couldn't say Don't, and I had not heart to say Do! I had not the courage to tell him frankly that we lived in a cabin with four rooms and a kitchen, and that butler, cook, footman, and housemaid, were all represented by a barefooted lassie, who was far more at home drawing a fishing-net than in cooking its contents. I was just snob enough to say, Tell us when we may look out for you; and without manliness to add, And I'll run away when I hear it. But he's a rare good fellow, and teases me every day to dine with him at the Arthur—a club where all the young swells of the Government offices assemble to talk of themselves, and sneer at their official superiors.

"I'll go out, if I can, and see Dolly before I leave, though she told me the family didn't like her having friends—the flunkies call them followers—and of course I ought not to do what would make her uncomfortable; still, one minute or two would suffice to get me some message to bring the Doctor, who'll naturally expect it. I'd like, besides, to tell Dolly of my good fortune—though it is, perhaps, not a very graceful thing to be full of one's own success to another, whose position is so painful as hers, poor girl. If you saw how pale she has grown, and how thin; even her voice has lost that jolly ring it had, and is now weak and poor. She seems so much afraid—of what or whom I can't make out—but all about her bespeaks terror. You say very little of the Abbey, and I am always thinking of it. The great big world, and this great big city that is its capital, are very small things to *me*, compared to that little circle that could be swept by a compass, with a centre at the Burnside, and a leg of ten miles long, that would take in the Abbey and the salmon-weir, the rabbit-warren and the boat-jetty! If I was very rich, I'd just add three rooms to our cottage, and put up one for myself, with my own traps; and another for you, with all the books that ever were written; and another for Skeff, or any other

good fellow we'd like to have with us. Wouldn't that be jolly, little mother? I won't deny I've seen what would be called prettier places here — the Thames above and below Richmond, for instance. Lawns smooth as velvet, great trees of centuries' growth, and fine houses of rich people, are on every side. But I like our own wild crags and breezy hill-sides better ; I like the great green sea, rolling smoothly on, and smashing over our rugged rocks, better than all those smooth eddied currents, with their smart racing-boats skimming about. If I could only catch these fellows outside the Skerries some day, with a wind from the north-west : wouldn't I spoil the colours of their gay jackets ?

“Here's Skeff come again. He says he is going to dine with some very pleasant fellows at the Star and Garter, and that I must positively come. He won't be denied, and I am in such rare spirits about my appointment, that I feel as if I should be a churl to myself to refuse, though I have my sore misgivings about accepting, what I well know I never can make any return for. How I'd like one word from you to decide for me !

“I must shut up. I'm off to Richmond, and they are all making such a row and hurrying me so, that

my head is turning. One has to hold the candle, and another stands ready with the sealing-wax, by way of expediting me. Good-bye, dearest mother—I start to-morrow for home.—Your affectionate son,

“TONY BUTLER.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A DINNER AT RICHMOND.

WITH the company that composed the dinner-party we have only a very passing concern. They were — including Skeffington and Tony—eight in all. Three were young officials from Downing Street; two were guardsmen; and one an inferior member of the royal household—a certain Mr Arthur Mayfair, a young fellow much about town, and known by every one.

The dinner was ostensibly to celebrate the promotion of one of the guardsmen—Mr Lyner; in reality, it was one of those small orgies of eating and drinking, which our modern civilisation has imported from Paris.

A well-spread, and even splendid table, was no novelty to Tony; but such extravagance and luxury as this he had never witnessed before; it was, in fact, a banquet in which all that was rarest and

most costly figured, and it actually seemed as if every land of Europe had contributed some delicacy or other to represent its claims to epicurism, at this congress. There were caviare from Russia, and oysters from Ostend, and red trout from the Highlands, and plover-eggs and pheasants from Bohemia, and partridges from Alsace, and scores of other delicacies, each attended by its appropriate wine ; to discuss which, with all the high connoisseurship of the table, furnished the whole conversation. Politics and literature apart, no subject could have been more removed from all Tony's experiences. He had never read Brillat-Savarin, nor so much as heard of M. Ude—of the great controversy between the merits of white and brown truffles, he knew positively nothing ; and he had actually eaten terrapin, and believed it to be very exquisite veal !

He listened, and listened very attentively. If it might have seemed to him that the company devoted a most extravagant portion of the time to the discussion, there was such a realism in the presence of the good things themselves, that the conversation never descended to frivolity ; while there was an earnestness in the talkers that rejected such an imputation.

To hear them, one would have thought—at least,

Tony thought—that all their lives had been passed in dining. Could any memory retain the mass of small minute circumstances that they recorded, or did they keep prandial records as others keep game-books? Not one of them ever forgot where, and when, and how, he had ever eaten anything remarkable for its excellence; and there was an elevation of language, an ecstasy imported into the reminiscences, that only ceased to be ludicrous when he grew used to it. Perhaps, as a mere listener, he partook more freely than he otherwise might of the good things before him. In the excellence and endless variety of the wines, there was, besides, temptation for cooler heads than his. Not to add, that on one or two occasions he found himself in a jury, empanelled to pronounce upon some nice question of flavour—points upon which, as the evening wore on, he entered with a far greater reliance on his judgment than he would have felt half an hour before dinner.

He had not what is called in the language of the table, a “made head.” That is to say, at Lyle Abbey, his bottle of Sneyd’s Claret after dinner was more than he liked well to drink; but now, when Sauterne succeeded Sherry, and Mawcobrunner came after Champagne, and in succession followed Bor-

deaux, and Burgundy, and Madeira, and then Bordeaux again of a rarer and choicer vintage, Tony's head grew addled and confused. Though he spoke very little, there passed through his mind all the varied changes that his nature was susceptible of. He was gay and depressed, daring and cautious, quarrelsome and forgiving, stern and affectionate, by turns. There were moments when he would have laid down his life for the company, and fleeting instants when his eye glanced around to see upon whom he could fix a deadly quarrel; now he felt rather vainglorious at being one of such a distinguished company, and now a sharp distrust shot through him that he was there to be the butt of these town-bred wits, whose merriment was nothing but a covert impertinence.

All these changeful moods only served to make him drink more deeply. He filled bumpers and drank them daringly. Skeffington told the story of the threat to kick Willis—not much in itself, but full of interest to the young officials who knew Willis as an institution, and could no more have imagined his personal chastisement than an insult to the royal arms. When Skeff, however, finished by saying that the Secretary of State himself rather approved of the measure, they began to feel that

Tony Butler was that greatest of all created things, "a rising man." For as the power of the unknown number is incommensurable, so the height to which a man's success may carry him can never be estimated.

"It's deuced hard to get one of these messenger-ships," said one of the guardsmen; "they say it's far easier to be named Secretary of Legation."

"Of course it is. Fifty fellows are able to ride in a coach for one that can read and write," said Mayfair.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Tony, his eyes flashing fire.

"Just what I said," replied the other, mildly—"that as there is no born mammal so helpless as a real gentleman, it's the rarest thing to find an empty shell to suit him."

"And they're well paid too," broke in the soldier. "Why, there's no fellow so well off. They have five pounds a-day."

"No, they have not."

"They have."

"They have not."

"On duty. When they're on duty."

"No, nor off duty."

"Harris told me."

“ Harris is a fool.”

“ He’s my cousin,” said a sickly young fellow, who looked deadly pale, “ and I’ll not hear him called a liar.”

“ Nobody said liar. I said he was a fool.”

“ And so he is,” broke in Mayfair, “ for he went and got married the other day to a girl without sixpence.”

“ Beaumont’s daughter ?”

“ Exactly. The ‘Lively Kitty,’ as we used to call her ; a name she’ll scarce go by in a year or two.”

“ I don’t think,” said Tony, with a slow, deliberate utterance—“ I don’t think that he has made me a suit—suit—suitable apology for what he said—eh; Skeff?”

“ Be quiet, will you ?” muttered the other.

“ Kitty had ten thousand pounds of her own.”

“ Not sixpence.”

“ I tell you she had.”

“ Grant it. What is ten thousand pounds ?” lisped out a little pink-cheeked fellow, who had a hundred and eighty per annum at the Board of Trade. “ If you are economical, you may get two years out of it.”

“ If I thought,” growled out Tony into Skeff’s ear, “ that he meant it for insolence, I’d punch his head, curls and all.”

“ Will you just be quiet ?” said Skeff again.

"I'd have married Kitty myself," said pink cheeks, "if I thought she had ten thousand."

"And I'd have gone on a visit to you," said Mayfair, "and we'd have played billiards, the French game, every evening."

"I never thought Harris was so weak as to go and marry," said the youngest of the party, not fully one-and-twenty.

"Every one hasn't your experience, Upton," said Mayfair.

"Why do the fellows bear all this?" whispered Tony again.

"I say, be quiet—do be quiet," mumbled Skeff.

"Who was it used to call Kitty Beaumont the Lass of Richmond Hill?" said Mayfair; and now another uproar ensued as to the authority in question, in which many contradictions were exchanged, and some wagers booked.

"Sing us that song Bailey made on her—'Fair Lady on the River's Bank,' you can sing it, Clinton?"

"Yes, let us have the song," cried several together.

"I'll wager five pounds I'll name a prettier girl on the same spot," said Tony to Skeff.

"Butler challenges the field," cried Skeff. "He knows, and will name, the prettiest girl in Richmond."

"I take him. What's the figure?" said Mayfair.

"And I—and I!" shouted three or four in a breath.

"I think he offered a pony," lisped out the youngest.

"I said, I'd bet five pounds," said Tony, fiercely ; "don't misrepresent *me*, sir."

"I'll take your money, then," cried Mayfair.

"No, no ; I was first ; I said 'done' before you," interposed a guardsman.

"But how can it be decided? we can't summon the rival beauties to our presence, and perform Paris and the apple," said Skeff.

"Come along with me and you shall see her," broke in Tony ; "she lives within less than five minutes' walk of where we are. I am satisfied that the matter should be left to your decision, Skeffington."

"No, no," cried several together ; "take Mayfair with you ; he is the fittest man amongst us for such a criticism ; he has studied these matters profoundly."

"Here's a health to all good lasses!" cried out another ; and goblets were filled with champagne, and drained in a moment, while some attempted the song ; and others, imagining that they had caught the air, started off with "Here's to the Maiden of Blooming Fifteen," making up an amount of confu-

sion that was perfectly deafening, in which the waiter entered to observe, in a very meek tone, that the Archdeacon of Halford was entertaining a select party in the next room, and entreated that they might be permitted to hear each other occasionally.

Such a burst of horror and indignation as followed this request! some were for an armed intervention at once; some for a general smash of all things practicable; and two or three, haughtier in their drunkenness, declared that the Star and Garter should have no more of their patronage, and proudly ordered the waiter to fetch the bill.

“Thirty-seven—nine—six,” said Mayfair, as he held the document near a candle; “make it an even forty for the waiters, and it leaves five pounds a-head, eh?—not too much after all.”

“Well, I don’t know; the asparagus was miserably small.”

“And I got no strawberries.”

“I have my doubts about that Moselle.”

“It ain’t dear: at least, it’s not dearer than anywhere else.”

While these criticisms were going forward, Tony perceived that each one in turn was throwing down his sovereigns on the table, as his contribution to the fund; and he approached Skeffington, to whisper

that he had forgotten his purse,—his sole excuse to explain, what he wouldn't confess, that he believed he was an invited guest. Skeff was, however, by this time so completely overcome by the last toast, that he sat staring fatuously before him, and could only mutter, in a melancholy strain, "To be, or not to be ; that's a question."

"Can you lend me some money ?" whispered Tony.
"I want your purse."

"He—takes my purse—trash—trash——" mumbled out the other.

"I'll book up for Skeffy," said one of the guardsmen ; "and now it's all right."

"No," said Tony aloud ; "I haven't paid ; I left my purse behind ; and I can't make Skeffington understand that I want a loan from him ;" and he stooped down again, and whispered in his ear.

While a buzz of voices assured Tony that "it didn't matter,—all had money, any one could pay," and so on, Skeffington gravely handed out his cigar-case, and said, "Take as much as you like, old fellow ; it was quarter-day last week."

In a wild uproarious burst of laughter they now broke up ; some helping Skeffington along, some performing mock ballet steps, and two or three attempting to walk with an air of rigid propriety,

which occasionally diverged into strange tangents.

Tony was completely bewildered. Never was a poor brain more addled than his. At one moment he thought them all the best fellows in the world: he'd have risked his neck for any of them; and at the next he regarded them as a set of insolent snobs, daring to show off airs of superiority to a stranger, because he was not one of them; and so he oscillated between the desire to show his affection for them, or have a quarrel with any of them.

Meanwhile, Mayfair, with a reasonably good voice and some taste, broke out into a wild sort of air, whose measure changed at every moment. One verse ran thus:—

“By the light of the moon, by the light of the moon,
We all went home by the light of the moon.

With a ringing song
We tramped along,
Recalling what we'll forget so soon,
How the wine was good,
And the talk was free,
And pleasant and gay the company.

“For the wine supplied
What our wits denied,
And we pledged the girls whose eyes we knew, whose eyes we
knew.
You ask her name, but what's that to you, what's that to you?”

"Well, there's where she lives, anyhow," muttered Tony, as he came to a dead stop on the road, and stared full at a small two-storeyed house in front of him.

"Ah, that's where she lives!" repeated Mayfair, as he drew his arm within Tony's, and talked in a low and confidential tone. "And a sweet, pretty cottage it is. What a romantic little spot! What if we were to serenade her?"

Tony gave no reply. He stood looking up at the closed shutters of the quiet house, which, to his eyes, represented a sort of penitentiary for that poor imprisoned hard-working girl. His head was not very clear, but he had just sense enough to remember the respect he owed her condition, and how jealously he should guard her from the interference of others. Meanwhile, Mayfair had leaped over the low paling of the little front garden, and stood now close to the house. With an admirable imitation of the prelude of a guitar, he began to sing,

"Come, dearest Lilla,
Thy anxious lover
Counts, counts the weary moments over"—

As he reached thus far, a shutter gently opened, and in the strong glare of the moonlight, some trace

of a head could be detected behind the curtain. Encouraged by this, the singer went on in a rich and flowery voice—

“Anxious he waits,
Thy voice to hear
Break, break on his enraptured ear.”

At this moment the window was thrown open, and a female voice, in an accent strongly Scotch, called out—“Awa wi’ ye—pack o’ ne’er-do-weels as ye are—awa wi’ ye a’! I’ll call the police.” But Mayfair went on—

“The night invites to love,
So tarry not above,
But Lilla—Lilla—Lilla come down to me!”

“I’ll come down to you, and right soon,” shouted a hoarse masculine voice. Two or three who had clambered over the paling beside Mayfair now scampered off; and Mayfair himself, making a spring, cleared the fence, and ran down the road at the top of his speed, followed by all but Tony, who, half in indignation at their ignominious flight, and half with some vague purpose of apology, stood his ground before the gate.

The next moment the hall door opened, and a short thick-set man, armed with a powerful blud-

geon, rushed out and made straight towards him. Seeing, however, that Tony stood firm, neither offering resistance, nor attempting escape, he stopped short, and cried out—"What for drunken blackguards are ye, that canna go home without disturbing a quiet neighbourhood?"

"If you can keep a civil tongue in your head," said Tony, "I'll ask your pardon for this disturbance."

"What's your apology to me, you young scamp?" cried the other, wrenching open the gate and passing out into the road. "I'd rather give you a lesson than listen to your excuses." He lifted his stick as he spoke, but Tony sprang upon him with the speed of a tiger, and, wrenching the heavy bludgeon out of his hand, flung it far into a neighbouring field, and then, grasping him by the collar with both hands, he gave him such a shake as very soon convinced his antagonist how unequal the struggle would be between them. "By Heaven!" muttered Tony, "if you so much as lay a hand on me, I'll send you after your stick. Can't you see that this was only a drunken frolic, that these young fellows did not want to insult you, and if I stayed here behind them, it was to appease, not to offend you?"

"Dinna speak to me, sir. Let me go—let go my coat. I'm not to be handled in this manner," cried the other, in passion.

"Go back to your bed, then!" said Tony, pushing him from him. "It's clear enough you have no gentleman's blood in your body, or you'd accept an amends, or resent an affront."

Stung by this retort, the other turned and aimed a blow at Butler's face; but he stopped it cleverly, and then, seizing him by the shoulder, he swung him violently round, and threw him within the gate of the garden.

"You are more angered than hurt," muttered Tony, as he looked at him for an instant.

"Oh, Tony, that this could be you!" cried a faint voice from a little window of an attic, and a violent sob closed the words.

Tony turned and went his way towards London, those accents ringing in his ears, and at every step he went repeating—"That this could be you!"

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE MEETING AND PARTING.

WHAT a dreary waking was that of Tony's on the morning after the orgies. Not a whit the less overwhelming from the great difficulty he had in recalling the events, and investigating his own share in them. There was nothing that he could look back upon with pleasure. Of the dinner and the guests, all that he could remember was the costliness and the tumult; and of the scene at Mrs M'Gruder's, his impression was of insults given and received, a violent altercation, in which his own share could not be defended.

How different had been his waking thoughts, had he gone as he proposed, to bid Dora a good-bye, and tell her of his great good fortune! How full would his memory now have been of her kind words and wishes! how much would he have to recall of her sisterly affection! for they had been

like brother and sister from their childhood. It was to Dora that Tony confided all his boyhood's sorrows, and to the same ear he had told his first tale of love, when the beautiful Alice Lyle had sent through his heart those emotions, which, whether of ecstasy or torture, make a new existence and a new being to him who feels them for the first time. He had loved Alice as a girl, and was all but heart-broken when she married. His sorrows—and were they not sorrows?—had all been intrusted to Dora, and from her he had heard such wise and kind counsels, such encouraging and hopeful words; and when the beautiful Alice came back, within a year, a widow, far more lovely than ever, he remembered how all his love was rekindled. Nor was it the less entrancing that it was mingled with a degree of deference for her station, and an amount of distance which her new position exacted.

He had intended to have passed his last evening with Dora in talking over these things—and how had he spent it? In a wild and disgraceful debauch, and in a company of which he felt himself well ashamed.

It was, however, no part of Tony's nature to spend time in vain regrets; he lived ever more in the present than the past. There were a number of

things to be done, and done at once. The first was to acquit his debt for that unlucky dinner ; and in a tremor of doubt, he opened his little store to see what remained to him. Of the eleven pounds ten shillings his mother gave him he had spent less than two pounds ; he had travelled third-class to London, and while in town denied himself every extravagance. He rang for his hotel bill, and was shocked to see that it came to three pounds seven-and-sixpence. He fancied he had half-starved himself, and he saw a catalogue of steaks and luncheons to his share, that smacked of very gluttony. He paid it without a word, gave an apology to the waiter, that he had run himself short of money, and could only offer him a crown. The dignified official accepted the excuse and the coin, with a smile of bland sorrow. It was a pity that cut both ways, for himself and for Tony too.

There now remained but a few shillings above five pounds, and he sat down and wrote this note :—

“ **MY DEAR SKEFFINGTON**,—Some one of your friends, last night, was kind enough to pay my share of the reckoning for me. Will you do me the favour to thank and repay him ? I am off to Ireland hurriedly, or I’d call and see you. I have

not even time to wait for those examination papers, which were to be delivered to me either to-day or to-morrow. Would you send them by post, addressed 'T. Butler, Burnside, Coleraine.' My head is not very clear to-day, but it should be more stupid if I could forget all your kindness since we met.—Believe me, very sincerely, &c.

“TONY BUTLER.”

The next was to his mother:—

“**DEAREST MOTHER**,—Don’t expect me on Saturday; it may be two or three days later ere I reach home. I am all right, in rare health and capital spirits, and never in my life felt more completely your own,

“TONY BUTLER.”

One more note remained, but it was not easy to write it, nor even to decide whether to address it to Dora or to Mr M’Gruder. At length he decided for the latter, and wrote thus:—

“**SIR**,—I beg to offer you the very humblest apology for the disturbance created last night before your house. We had all drunk too much

wine, lost our heads, and forgotten good manners. If I had been in a fitting condition to express myself properly, I'd have made my excuses on the spot. As it is, I make the first use of my recovered brains to tell you how heartily ashamed I am of my conduct, and how desirous I feel to know that you will cherish no ungenerous feelings towards your faithful servant,

“T. BUTLER.”

“I hope he'll think it all right. I hope this will satisfy him. I trust it is not too humble, though I mean to be humble. If he's a gentleman, he'll think no more of it; but he may not be a gentleman, and will probably fancy that because I stoop, he ought to kick me. That would be a mistake; and perhaps it would be as well to add, by way of P.S.—‘If the above is not fully satisfactory, and that you prefer another issue to this affair, my address is, T. Butler, Burnside, Coleraine, Ireland.’

“Perhaps that would spoil it all,” thought Tony. “I want him to forgive an offence, and it's not the best way to that end to say, ‘If you like fighting better, don't baulk your fancy.’ No, no; I'll send it in its first shape. I don't feel very comfortable on my knees, it is true, but it is all my own fault if I am there.

“And now to reach home again. I wish I knew how that was to be done! Seven or eight shillings are not a very big sum, but I’d set off with them on foot, if there was no sea to be traversed.” To these thoughts there was no relief by the possession of any article of value that he could sell or pledge. He had neither watch nor ring, nor any of those fanciful trinkets which modern fashion affects.

He knew not one person from whom he could ask the loan of a few pounds; nor, worse again, could he be certain of being able to repay them within a reasonable time. To approach Skeffington on such a theme was impossible; anything rather than this. If he were once at Liverpool, there were sure to be many captains of northern steamers that would know him, and give him a passage home. But how to get to Liverpool? The cheapest railroad fare was above a pound. If he must needs walk, it would take him a week, and he could not afford himself more than one meal a-day, taking his chance to sleep under a corn-stack or a hedge-row. Very dear indeed was the price that grand banquet cost him, and yet not dearer than half the extravagances men are daily and hourly committing —the only difference being, that the debt is not usually exacted so promptly. He wrote his name

on a card, and gave it to the waiter, saying "When I send to you under this name, you will give my portmanteau to the bearer of the message, for I shall probably not come back—at least for some time."

The waiter was struck by the words, but more still by the dejected look of one whom, but twenty-four hours back, he had been praising for his frank and gay bearing.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, sir?" asked the man, respectfully.

"Not a great deal," said Tony, with a faint smile.

"I was afraid, sir, from seeing you look pale this morning. I fancied, indeed, that there was something amiss. I hope you're not displeased at the liberty I took, sir?"

"Not a bit; indeed I feel grateful to you for noticing that I was not in good spirits. I have so very few friends in this big city of yours, your sympathy was pleasant to me. Will you remember what I said about my luggage?"

"Of course, sir, I'll attend to it; and if not called for within a reasonable time, is there any address you'd like me to send it to?"

Tony stared at the man, who seemed to flinch under the gaze, and it shot like a bolt through his

mind, He thinks I have some gloomy purpose in my head. "I believe I apprehend you," said he, laying his hand on the man's shoulder; "but you are all wrong. There is nothing more serious the matter with me, than to have run myself out of money, and I cannot conveniently wait here till I write and get an answer from home; there's the whole of it."

"Oh, sir, if you'll not be offended at a humble man like me—if you'd forgive the liberty I take, and let me, as far as a ten-pound note;" he stammered and reddened, and seemed positively wretched in his attempt to explain himself without any breach of propriety. Nor was Tony indeed less moved as he said:—

"I thank you heartily; you have given me something to remember of this place with gratitude so long as I live. But I am not so hard pressed as you suspect. It is a merely momentary inconvenience, and a few days will set it all right. Good-bye; I hope we'll meet again." And he shook the man's hand cordially in his own strong fingers, and passed out with a full heart and a very choking throat.

When he turned into the street, he walked along, without choosing his way. His mind was too much occupied to let him notice either the way or the

passers-by, and he sauntered along, now musing over his own lot, now falling back upon that trustful heart of the poor waiter, whose position could scarcely have inspired such confidence.

"I am certain that what are called moralists are unfair censors of their fellow-men. I'll be sworn there is more of kindness, and generosity, and honest truth in the world, than there is of knavery and falsehood; but as we have no rewards for the one, and keep up jails and hulks for the other, we have nothing to guide our memories. That's the whole of it; all the statistics are on one side."

While he was thus ruminating, he had wandered along, and was already deep in the very heart of the City. Nor did the noise, the bustle, the overwhelming tide of humanity arouse him, as it swept along in its ceaseless flow. So intently was his mind turned inward, that he narrowly escaped being run over by an omnibus, the pole of which struck him, and under whose wheels he had unquestionably fallen, if it were not that a strong hand grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him powerfully back upon the flagway.

"Is it blind you are, that you didn't hear the 'bus?" cried a somewhat gruff voice, with an accent that told of a land he liked well; and Tony turned

and saw a stout strongly-built young fellow, dressed in a sort of bluish frieze, and with a bundle on a stick over his shoulder. He was good-looking, but of a more serious cast of features than is common with the lower-class Irish.

"I see," said Tony, "that I owe this good turn to a countryman. You're from Ireland?"

"Indeed, and I am, your honour, and no lie in it," said he, reddening, as if—although there was nothing to be ashamed of by the avowal—popular prejudice lay rather in the other direction.

"I don't know what I was thinking of," said Tony again; and even yet his head had not regained its proper calm. "I forgot all about where I was, and never heard the horses till they were on me."

"'Tis what I remarked, sir," said the other, as with his sleeve he brushed the dirt off Tony's coat. "I saw you was like one in a dhream."

"I wish I had anything worth offering you," said Tony, reddening, while he placed the last few shillings he had in the other's palm.

"What's this for?" said the man, half angrily—"sure you don't think it's for money I did it;" and he pushed the coin back almost rudely from him.

While Tony assuaged, as well as he might, the anger of his wounded pride, they walked on together for some time, till at last the other said—“I'll have to hurry away now, your honour; I'm to be at Blackwall, to catch the packet for Derry, by twelve o'clock.”

“What packet do you speak of?”

“The Foyle, sir. She's to sail this evening, and I have my passage paid for me, and I mustn't lose it.”

“If I had my luggage, I'd go in her too. I want to cross over to Ireland.”

“And where is it, sir—the luggage, I mean?”

“Oh, it's only a portmanteau, and it's at the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden.”

“If your honour wouldn't mind taking charge of this,” said he, pointing to his bundle, “I'd be off in a jiffy, and get the trunk, and be back by the time you reached the steamer.”

“Would you really do me this service? Well, here's my card; when you show this to the waiter he'll hand you the portmanteau; and there is nothing to pay.”

“All right, sir; the Foyle, a big paddle-steamer—you'll know her red chimney the moment you see it,” and without another word he gave Tony his bundle and hurried away.

"Is not this trustfulness?" thought Tony, as he walked onward; "I suppose this little bundle contains all this poor fellow's worldly store, and he commits it to a stranger, without one moment of doubt or hesitation." It was for the second time, on that same morning, that his heart was touched by a trait of kindness; and he began to feel, that if such proofs of brotherhood were rife in the world, narrow fortune was not half so bad a thing as he had ever believed it.

It was a long walk he had before him, and not much time to do it in, so that he was obliged to step briskly out. As for the bundle, it is but fair to own, that at first he carried it with a certain shame and awkwardness, affecting, in various ways, to assure the passers-by that such an occupation was new to him; but as time wore on, and he saw, as he did see, that very few noticed him, and none troubled themselves as to what was the nature of his burden, he grew more indifferent, well consoled by thinking that nothing was more unlikely than that he should be met by any one he knew.

When he got down to the river-side, boats were leaving in every direction, and one for the Foyle, with two passengers, offered itself at the moment. He jumped in, and soon found himself aboard a

large mercantile boat, her deck covered with fragments of machinery and metal for some new factory in Belfast. "Where's the captain?" asked Tony, of a gruff-looking man in a tweed coat and a wideawake.

"I'm the captain; and what then?" said the other.

In a few words Tony explained that he had found himself short of cash, and not wishing to be detained till he could write and have an answer from home, he begged he might have a deck passage. "If it should cost more than I have money for, I will leave my trunk with your steward till I remit my debt."

"Get those boats aboard—clear away that hawser there—look out, or you'll foul that collier," cried the skipper, his deep voice ringing above the din and crash of the escaping steam, but never so much as noticing one word of Tony's speech.

Too proud to repeat his address, and yet doubting how it had been taken, he stood, occasionally buffeted about by the sailors as they hurried hither and thither; and now, amidst the din, a great bell rang out, and while it clattered away, some scrambled up the side of the ship, and others clambered down, while, with shouts and oaths and imprecations on every side, the great mass swung round,

and two slow revolutions of her paddles showed she was ready to start. Almost frantic with anxiety for his missing friend, Tony mounted on a bulwark, and scanned every boat he could see.

“Back her!” screamed the skipper; “there, gently—all right. Go ahead;” and now with a shouldering, surging heave, the great black monster lazily moved forward, and gained the middle of the river. Boats were now hurrying wildly to this side and to that, but none towards the Foyle. “What will become of me? What will he think of me?” cried Tony; and he peered down into the yellow tide, almost doubtful if he ought not to jump into it.

“Go on,” cried the skipper; and the speed increased, a long swell issuing from either paddle, and stretching away to either bank of the river. Far away in this rocking tide, tossing hopelessly and in vain, Tony saw a small boat wherein a man was standing wildly waving his handkerchief by way of signal.

“There he is, in one minute—give him one minute, and he will be here,” cried Tony, not knowing to whom he spoke.

“You’ll get jammed, my good fellow, if you don’t come down from that,” said a sailor. “You’ll be caught in the davits when they swing round;” and

seeing how inattentive he was to the caution, he laid a hand upon him and forced him upon deck. The ship had now turned a bend of the river, and as Tony turned aft to look for the boat, she was lost to him, and he saw her no more.

For some miles of the way, all were too much occupied to notice him. There was much to stow away and get in order, the cargo having been taken in even to the latest moment before they started. There were some carriages and horses, too, on board, neither of which met from the sailors more deferential care than they bestowed on cast-metal cranks and iron sleepers, thus occasioning little passages between those in charge and the crew, that were the reverse of amicable. It was in one of these Tony heard a voice he was long familiar with. It was Sir Arthur Lyle's coachman, who was even more overjoyed than Tony at the recognition. He had been sent over to fetch four carriage-horses and two open carriages for his master, and his adventures and mishaps were, in his own estimation, above all human experience.

“I'll have to borrow a five-pound note from you,” said Tony; “I have come on board without anything—even my luggage is left behind.”

“Five-and-twenty, Mr Tony, if you want it. I'm

as glad as fifty to see you here. You'll be able to make these fellows mind what I say. There's not as much as a spare tarpaulin to put over the beasts at night ; and if the ship rocks, their legs will be knocked to pieces."

If Tony had not the same opinion of his influence, he did not, however, hesitate to offer his services, and assisted the coachman to pad the horse-boxes, and bandage the legs with an overlaid covering of hay rope against any accidents.

"Are you steerage or aft ?" asked a surly-looking steward of Tony as he was washing his hands after his exertions.

"There's a question to ask of one of the best blood in Ireland," interposed the coachman.

"The best blood in Ireland will then have to pay cabin fare," said the steward, as he jotted down a Mem. in his book ; and Tony was now easy enough in mind to laugh at the fellow's impertinence as he paid the money.

The voyage was not eventful in any way ; the weather was fine, the sea not rough, and the days went by as monotonously as need be. If Tony had been given to reflection, he would have had a glorious opportunity to indulge the taste, but it was the very least of all his tendencies.

He would, indeed, have liked much to review his life, and map out something of his future road; but he could do nothing of this kind without a companion. Asking him to think for himself, and by himself, was pretty much like asking him to play chess or backgammon with himself, where it depended on his caprice which side was to be the winner. The habit of self-depreciation had, besides, got hold of him, and he employed it as an excuse to cover his inertness. "What's the use of my doing this, that, or t'other? I'll be a stupid dog to the end of the chapter. It's all waste of time to set me down to this or that. Other fellows could learn it—it's impossible for *me*."

It is strange how fond men will grow of pleading *in forma pauperis* to their own hearts—even men constitutionally proud and high-spirited. Tony had fallen into this unlucky habit, and got at last to think it was his safest way in life to trust very little to his judgment.

"If I hadn't been 'mooning,' I'd not have walked under the pole of the omnibus, nor chanced upon this poor fellow, whose bundle I have carried away, nor lost my own kit, which, after all, was something to *me*." Worse than all these—infinitely worse—was the thought of how that poor peasant would

think of him! "What a cruel lesson of mistrust and suspicion have I implanted in that honest heart! What a terrible revulsion must have come over him, when he found I had sailed away and left him!" Poor Tony's reasoning was not acute enough to satisfy him that the man could not accuse him for what was out of his power to prevent—the departure of the steamer; nor, with Tony's own luggage in his possession, could he arraign his honesty, or distrust his honour.

He bethought him that he would consult Waters, for whose judgment in spavins, thoroughpins, capped hocks, and navicular lameness, he had the deepest veneration. Waters, who knew horses so thoroughly, must needs not be altogether ignorant of men.

"I say, Tom," cried he, "sit down here, and let me tell you something that's troubling me a good deal, and perhaps you can give me some advice on it." They sat down accordingly under the shelter of a horse-box, while Tony related circumstantially his late misadventure.

The old coachman heard him to the end without interruption. He smoked throughout the whole narrative, only now and then removing his pipe to intimate by an emphatic nod that the "court was with the counsel." Indeed, he felt that there was

something judicial in his position, and assumed a full share of importance on the strength of it.

"There's the whole case now before you," said Tony, as he finished—"what do you say to it?"

"Well, there an't a great deal to say to it, Mr Tony," said he, slowly. "If the other chap has got the best kit, by course he has got the best end of the stick; and you may have an easy conscience about that. If there's any money or val'able in *his* bundle, it is just likely there will be some trace of his name, and where he lives too; so that, turn out either way, you're all right."

"So that you advise me to open his pack and see if I can find a clue to him."

"Well, indeed, I'd do that much out of cur'osity. At all events, you'll not get to know about him from the blue handkercher with the white spots."

Tony did not quite approve the counsel; he had his scruples, even in a good cause, about this investigation, and he walked the deck till far into the night, pondering over it. He tried to solve the case by speculating on what the countryman would have done with *his* pack. "He'll have doubtless tried to find out where I am to be met with or come at. He'll have ransacked my traps, and if so, there will be the less need of *my* investigating *his*. *He's* sure

to trace *me*." This reasoning satisfied him so perfectly that he lay down at last to sleep with an easy conscience and so weary a brain that he slept profoundly. As he awoke, however, he found that Waters had already decided the point of conscience which had so troubled him, and was now sitting contemplating the contents of the peasant's bundle.

"There an't so much as a scrap o' writing, Mr Tony; there an't even a prayer-book with his name in it—but there's a track to him for all that. I have him!" and he winked with that self-satisfied knowingness which had so often delighted him in the detection of a splint or a bone-spavin.

"You have him," repeated Tony. "Well, what of him?"

"He's a jailer, sir—yes, a jailer. I won't say he's the chief—he's maybe second or third—but he's one of 'em."

"How do you know that?"

"Here's how I found it out;" and he drew forth a blue cloth uniform, with yellow cuffs and collar, and a yellow seam down the trousers. There were no buttons on the coat, but both on the sleeve and the collar were embroidered two keys, crosswise. "Look at them, Master Tony; look at them, and say an't that as clear as day? It's some new regulation,

I suppose, to put them in uniform ; and there's the keys, the mark of the lock-up, to show who he is that wears them."

Though the last man in the world to read riddles or unravel difficulties, Tony did not accept this information very willingly. In truth, he felt a repugnance to assign to the worthy country fellow a station which bears, in the appreciation of every Irishman, a certain stain. For, do as we will, reason how we may, the old estimate of the law as an oppression surges up through our thoughts, just as springs well up in an undrained soil.

"I'm certain you're wrong, Waters," said he, boldly; "he hadn't a bit the look of that about him: he was a fine, fresh-featured, determined sort of fellow, but without a trace of cunning or distrust in his face."

"I'll stand to it, I'm right, Master Tony. What does keys mean ? Answer me that. An't they to lock up ? It must be to lock up something or somebody—you agree to that?"

Tony gave a sort of grunt, which the other took for concurrence, and continued.

"It's clear enough he an't the county treasurer," said he, with a mocking laugh—"nor he don't keep the Queen's private purse neither; no, sir. It's

another sort of val'ables is under his charge. It's highwaymen and housebreakers, and felony chaps."

"Not a bit of it; he's no more a jailer than I'm a hangman. Besides, what is to prove that this uniform is his own? Why not be a friend's—a relation's? Would a fellow trained to the ways of a prison trust the first man he meets in the street, and hand him over his bundle? Is that like one whose daily life is passed among rogues and vagabonds?"

"That's exactly how it is," said Waters, closing one eye to look more piercingly astute. "Did you ever see anything trust another so much as a cat does a mouse? She hasn't no dirty suspicions at all, but lets him run here and run there, only with a make-believe of her paw letting him feel that he an't to trespass too far on her patience."

"Pshaw!" said Tony, turning away angrily; and he muttered to himself as he walked off, "How stupid it is to take any view of life from a fellow who has never looked at it from a higher point than a hayloft!"

As the steamer rounded Fairhead, and the tall cliffs of the Causeway came into view, other thoughts soon chased away all memory of the poor country fellow. It was home was now before him—home, that no humility can rob of its hold upon the heart;

home, that appeals to the poorest of us by the self-same sympathies the richest and greatest feel! Yes; yonder was Carrig-a-Rede, and there were the Skerries, so near and yet so far off. How slowly the great mass seemed to move, though it was about an hour ago she seemed to cleave the water like a fish. How unfair to stop her course at Larne to land those two or three passengers, and what tiresome leave-takings they indulge in; and the luggage, too, they'll never get it together! So thought Tony, his impatience mastering both reason and generosity.

“I'll have to take the horses on to Derry, Master Tony,” said Waters, in an insinuating tone of voice, for he knew well what able assistance the other could lend him in any difficulty of the landing. “Sir Arthur thought that if the weather was fine we might be able to get them out on a raft and tow them in to shore, but it's too rough for that.”

“Far too rough,” said Tony, his eyes straining to catch the well-known landmarks of the coast.

“And with blood-horses too, in top condition, there's more danger.”

“Far more.”

“So, I hope, your honour will tell the master that I didn't ask the captain to stop, for I saw it was no use.”

"None whatever. I'll tell him—that is, if I see him," muttered Tony, below his breath.

"Maybe, if there was too much sea 'on' for your honour to land——"

"What?" interrupted Tony, eyeing him sternly.

"I was saying, sir, that if your honour was forced to come on to Derry——"

"How should I be forced?"

"By the heavy surf, no less," said Waters, peevishly, for he foresaw failure to his negotiation.

"The tide will be on the flood till eleven, and if they can't lower a boat I'll swim it, that's all. As to going on to Derry with you, Tom," added he, laughing, "I'd not do it if you were to give me your four thoroughbreds for it."

"Well, the wind's freshening anyhow," grumbled Waters, not very sorry, perhaps, at the turn the weather was taking.

"It will be the rougher for you as you sail up the Lough," said Tony, as he lighted his cigar.

Waters pondered a good deal over what he could not but regard as a great change in character. This young man, so gay, so easy, so careless—so ready to do anything, or do nothing—how earnest he had grown, and how resolute and how stern too. Was this a sign that the world was going well, or the

reverse, with him? Here was a knotty problem, and one which, in some form or other, has ere now puzzled wiser heads than Waters's. For as the traveller threw off in the sunshine the cloak which he had gathered round him in the storm, prosperity will as often disclose the secrets of our hearts as that very poverty that has not wealth enough to buy a padlock for them.

"You want to land here, young man," said the captain to Tony; "and there's a shore-boat close alongside. Be alive, and jump in when she comes near."

"Good-bye, Tom," said Tony, shaking hands with him. "I'll report well of the beasts, and say also how kindly you treated me."

"You'll tell Sir Arthur that the rub on the off shoulder won't signify, sir; and that Emperor's hock is going down every day. And please to say, sir—for he'll mind *you* more than *me*—that there's nothing will keep beasts from kicking when a ship takes to rollin'; and that, when the helpers got sea-sick, and couldn't keep on deck, if it hadn't been for *yourself*— Oh, he's not minding a word I'm saying," muttered he, disconsolately; and certainly this was the truth, for Tony was now standing on a bulwark, with the end of a rope in his hand, slung

whip fashion from the yard, to enable him to swing himself at an opportune moment into the boat, all the efforts of the rowers being directed to keep her from the steamer's side.

"Now's your time, my smart fellow," cried the captain—"off with you!" And as he spoke, Tony swung himself free with a bold spring, and, just as the boat rose on a wave, dropped neatly into her.

"Well done for a landsman!" cried the skipper; "port the helm, and keep away."

"You're forgetting the bundle, Master Tony," cried Waters, and he flung it towards him with all his strength; but it fell short, dropped into the sea, floated for about a second or so, and then sank for ever.

Tony uttered what was not exactly a blessing on his awkwardness, and, turning his back to the steamer, seized the tiller and steered for shore.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE ABBEY.

“WHO said that Tony Butler had come back?” said Sir Arthur, as they sat at breakfast on the day after his arrival.

“The gardener saw him last night, papa,” said Mrs Trafford; “he was sitting with his mother on the rocks below the cottage; and when Gregg saluted him, he called out, ‘All well at the Abbey, I hope?’”

“It would have been more suitable if he had taken the trouble to assure himself of that fact by a visit here,” said Lady Lyle. “Don’t you think so, Mr Maitland?”

“I am disposed to agree with you,” said he, gravely.

“Besides,” added Sir Arthur, “he must have come over in the Foyle, and ought to be able to bring me some news of my horses. Those two

rough nights have made me very uneasy about them."

"Another reason for a little attention on his part," said her ladyship, bridling; and then, as if anxious to show that so insignificant a theme could not weigh on her thoughts, she asked her daughter when Mark and Isabella purposed coming home.

"They spoke of Saturday, mamma; but it seems now that Mrs Maxwell has got up—or somebody has for her—an archery meeting for Tuesday, and she writes a most pressing entreaty for me to drive over, and, if possible, persuade Mr Maitland to accompany me."

"Which I sincerely trust he will not think of."

"And why, dearest mamma?"

"Can you ask me, Alice? Have we not pushed Mr Maitland's powers of patience far enough by our own dulness, without subjecting him to the stupidities of Tilney Park?—the dreariest old mansion of a dreary neighbourhood."

"But he might like it. As a matter of experimental research, he told us how he passed an autumn with the Mandans, and ate nothing but eels and wood-squirrels."

"You are forgetting the prairie rats, which are really delicacies."

“Nor did I include the charms of the fair Chinhontas, who was the object of your then affections,” said she, laughingly, but in a lower tone,

“So, then,” said he, “Master Mark has been playing traitor, and divulging my confidence. The girl was a marvellous horsewoman, which is a rare gift with Indian women. I’ve seen her sit a drop-leap—I’ll not venture to say the depth, but certainly more than the height of a man—with her arms extended wide, and the bridle loose and flowing.”

“And you followed in the same fashion?” asked Alice, with a roguish twinkle of the eye.

“I see that Mark has betrayed me all through,” said he, laughing. “I own I tried it, but not with the success that such ardour deserved. I came head-foremost to the ground before my horse.”

“After all, Mr Maitland, one is not obliged to ride like a savage,” said Lady Lyle.

“Except when one aspires to the hand of a savage princess, mamma. Mr Maitland was ambitious in those days.”

“Very true,” said he, with a deep sigh; “but it was the only time in my life in which I could say that I suffered my affections to be influenced by mere worldly advantages. She was a great heiress; she had a most powerful family connection.”

“How absurd you are!” said Lady Lyle, good-humouredly.

“Let him explain himself, mamma; it is so very seldom he will condescend to let us learn any of his sentiments on any subject. Let us hear him about marriage.”

“It is an institution I sincerely venerate. If I have not entered into the holy estate myself, it is simply from feeling I am not good enough. I stand without the temple, and only strain my eyes to catch a glimpse of the sanctuary.”

“Does it appear to you so very awful and appalling, then?” said my lady.

“Certainly it does. All the efforts of our present civilisation seem directed to that end. We surround it with whatever can inspire terror. We call in the Law as well as the Church—we add the Statutes to the Liturgy; and we close the whole with the most depressing of all festivities—a wedding-breakfast.”

“And the Mandans, do they take a more cheerful view of matters?” asked Alice.

“How can you be so silly, Alice?” cried Lady Lyle.

“My dear mamma, are you forgetting what a marvellous opportunity we enjoy of learning the

geography of an unknown sea, from one of the only voyagers who has ever traversed it?"

"Do you mean to go to Tilney, Alice?" asked her mother, curtly.

"If Mr Maitland would like to add Mrs Maxwell to his curiosities of acquaintance."

"I have met her already. I think her charming. She told me of some port, or a pair of coach-horses, I can't be certain which, her late husband purchased forty-two years ago; and she so mingled the subjects together, that I fancied the horses were growing yellow, and the wine actually frisky."

"I see that you *have* really listened to her," said Mrs Trafford. "Well, do you consent to this visit?"

"Delighted. Tell me, by way of parenthesis, is she a near neighbour of the worthy Commodore with the charming daughters? Gambier Graham I think his name is."

"Yes; she lives about twelve miles from his cottage: but why do you ask?"

"I have either promised, or he fancies I have promised, to pay him a flying visit."

"Another case of a savage princess," whispered Mrs Trafford, and he laughed heartily at the conceit. "If we take the low road—it's very little

longer and much prettier—we pass the cottage; and if your visit be not of great length—more than a morning call, in fact—I'll go there with you."

"You overwhelm me with obligations," said he, bowing low, to which she replied by a curtsy so profound as to throw an air of ridicule over his courtly politeness.

"Shall we say to-morrow for our departure, Mr Maitland?"

"I am at your orders, madam."

"Well, then, I'll write to dear old aunt Maxwell—I suppose she'll be your aunt too before you leave Tilney (for we all adopt a relation so very rich, and without an heir)—and delight her by saying that I have secured Mr Maitland, an announcement which will create a flutter in the neighbourhood by no means conducive to good archery."

"Tell her we only give him up till Wednesday," said Lady Lyle, "for I hope to have the Crayshaws here by that time, and I shall need you all back to receive them."

"More beauties, Mr Maitland," exclaimed Mrs Trafford. "What are you looking so grave about?"

"I was thinking it was just possible that I might be called away suddenly, and that there are some letters I ought to write; and last of all,

whether I shouldn't go and make a hurried visit to Mrs Butler; for in talking over old friends in Scotland, we have grown already intimate."

"What a mysterious face for such small concerns!" said Mrs Trafford. "Didn't you say something, papa, about driving me over to look at the two-year-olds?"

"Yes; I am going to inspect the paddock, and told Giles to meet me there."

"What's the use of our going without Tony?" said she, disconsolately; "he's the only one of us knows anything about a colt."

"I really did hope you were beginning to learn that this young gentleman was not an essential of our daily life here," said Lady Lyle, haughtily. "I am sorry that I should have deceived myself."

"My dear mamma, please to remember your own ponies that have become undrivable, and Selim, that can't even be saddled. Gregg will tell you that he doesn't know what has come over the melon-bed — the plants look all scorched and withered; and it was only yesterday papa said that he'd have the schooner drawn up till Tony came back to decide on the new keel and the balloon jib!"

"What a picture of us to present to Mr Mait-

land! but I trust, sir, that you know something of my daughter's talent for exaggerated description by this time, and you will not set us down for the incapables she would exhibit us." Lady Lyle moved haughtily away as she spoke, and Sir Arthur, drawing Mrs Trafford's arm within his own, said, "You're in a fighting mood to-day. Come over and torment Giles."

"There's nothing I like better," said she. "Let me go for my hat and a shawl."

"And I'm off to my letter-writing," said Maitland.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE COTTAGE.

WHAT a calm, still, mellow evening it was, as Tony sat with his mother in the doorway of the cottage, their hands clasped, and in silence; each very full of thought indeed, but still fuller of that sweet luxury, the sense of being together after an absence—the feeling that home was once more home, in all that can make it a centre of love and affection.

“I began to think you weren’t coming back at all, Tony,” said she, “when first you said Tuesday, and then it was Friday, and then it came to be the middle of another week. ‘Ah, me!’ said I to the Doctor, ‘he’ll not like the little cottage down amongst the tall ferns and the heather, after all that grand town and its fine people.’”

“If you knew how glad I am to be back here,”

said he, with a something like choking about the throat—"if you knew what a different happiness I feel under this old porch, and with you beside me!"

"My dear, dear Tony, let us hope we are to have many such evenings as this together. Let me now hear all about your journey, for as yet you have only told me about that good-hearted country fellow whose bundle has been lost. Begin at the beginning, and try and remember everything."

"Here goes, then, for a regular report. See, mother, you'd not believe it of me, but I jotted all down in a memorandum-book, so that there's no trusting to bad memory—all's in black and white."

"That *was* prudent, Tony. I'm really glad that you have such forethought. Let me see it."

"No, no. It's clean and clear beyond your reading. I shall be lucky enough if I can decipher it myself. Here we begin: 'Albion, Liverpool Capital breakfast, but dear. Wanted change for my crown-piece, but chaffed out of it by pretty barmaid, who said'—Oh, that's all stuff and nonsense," said he, reddening. "'Mail-train to London: not allowed to smoke first class; travelled third,

and had my 'baccy.' I needn't read all this balderdash, mother ; I'll go on to business matters. 'Skeffy, a trump, told me where he buys "birds-eye" for one and nine the pound ; and, mixed with cavendish, it makes grand smoking. Skeffy says he'll get me the first thing vacant."

"Who is Skeffy ? I never heard of him before."

"Of course you've heard. He's private secretary to Sir Harry, and gives away all the Office patronage. I don't think he's five feet five high, but he's made like a Hercules. Tom Sayers says Skeffy's deltoid—that's the muscle up here—is finer than any in the ring, and he's such an active devil. I must tell you of the day I held up the 'Times' for him to jump through ; but I see you are impatient for the serious things—well, now for it.

"Sir Harry, cruel enough, in a grand sort of overbearing way, told me my father was called Watty. I don't believe it ; at least the fellow who took the liberty must have earned the right by a long apprenticeship."

"You are right there, Tony ; there were not many would venture on it."

"Did any one ever call him Wat Tartar, mother?"

"If they had, they'd have caught one, Tony, I promise you."

“I thought so. Well, he went on to say that he had nothing he could give me. It was to the purport that I was fit for nothing, and I agreed with him.”

“That was not just prudent, Tony; the world is prone enough to disparage without helping them to the road to it.”

“Possibly—but he read me like a book, and said that I only came to him because I was hopeless. He asked me if I knew a score of things he was well aware that I must be ignorant of, and groaned every time I said No! When he said, ‘Go home and brush up your French and Italian,’ I felt as if he said, ‘Look over your rent-roll and thin your young timber.’ He’s a humbug, mother.”

“Oh, Tony, you must not say that.”

“I will say it; he’s a humbug, and so is the other.”

“Who is the other you speak of?”

“Lord Ledgerton, a smartish old fellow, with a pair of grey eyes that look through you, and a mouth that you can’t guess whether he’s going to eat you up or to quiz you. It was he that said, ‘Make Butler a messenger.’ They didn’t like it. The Office fellows looked as sulky as night; but

they had to bow and snigger, and say, 'Certainly, my Lord ;' but I know what they intend, for all that. They mean to pluck me ; that's the way they'll do it : for when I said I was nothing to boast of in English, and something worse in French, they grinned and exchanged smiles, as much as to say, 'There's a rasper he'll never get over.'

"And what is a messenger, Tony ?"

"He's a fellow that carries the despatches over the whole world—at least wherever there is civilisation enough to have a Minister or an Envoy. He starts off from Downing Street with half-a-dozen great bags as tall as me, and he drops one at Paris, another at Munich, another at Turin, and perhaps the next at Timbuctoo. He goes full speed—regular steeple-chase pace—and punches the head of the first postmaster that delays him ; and as he is well paid, and has nothing to think of but the road, the life isn't such a bad one."

"And does it lead to anything—is there any promotion from it ?"

"Not that I know, except to a pension ; but who wants anything better ? Who asks for a jollier life than rattling over Europe in all directions at the Queen's expense ? Once on a time they were all

snobs, or the same thing ; now they are regular swells, who dine with the Minister, and walk into the Attachés at billiards or blind hookey ; for the Dons saw it was a grand thing to keep the line for younger sons, and have a career where learning might be left out, and brains were only a burden ! ”

“ I never heard of such a line of life,” said she, gravely.

“ I had it from the fellows themselves. There were five of them in the waiting-room, tossing for sovereigns and cursing the first clerk, whoever he is ; and they told me they’d not change with the First Secretaries of any Legation in Europe. But who is this, mother, that I see coming down the hill ?—he’s no acquaintance of ours, I think ? ”

“ Oh, it’s Mr Maitland, Tony,” said she, in some confusion ; for she was not always sure in what temper Tony would receive a stranger.

“ And who may Mr Maitland be ? ”

“ A very charming and a very kind person too, whose acquaintance I made since you left this : he brought me books and flowers, and some geranium slips ; and, better than all, his own genial company.”

“ He’s not much of a sportsman, I see—that short gun he carries is more like a walking-stick than a

fowling-piece." And Tony turned his gaze seaward, as though the stranger was not worth a further scrutiny.

"They told me I should find you here, madam," said Maitland, as he came forward, with his hat raised, and a pleasant smile on his face.

"My son, sir," said the old lady, proudly—"my son Tony, of whom I have talked to you."

"I shall be charmed if Mr Butler will allow me to take that place in his acquaintance which a sincere interest in him gives me some claim to," said Maitland, approaching Tony, intending to shake his hand, but too cautious to risk a repulse, if it should be meditated.

Tony drew himself up haughtily, and said, "I am much honoured, sir; but I don't see any reason for such an interest in me."

"Oh, Tony," broke in the widow; but Maitland interrupted and said, "It's easy enough to explain. Your mother and myself have grown, in talking over a number of common friends, to fancy that we knew each other long ago. It was, I assure you, a very fascinating delusion for me. I learned to recall some of the most cherished of my early friends, and remember traits in them which had been the delight of my childhood. Pray forgive me, then, if in such

a company your figure got mixed up, and I thought or fancied that I knew you."

There was a rapid eagerness in the manner he said these words that seemed to vouch for their sincerity, but their only immediate effect was to make Tony very ill at ease and awkward.

"Mr Maitland has not told you, as he might have told you, Tony, that he came here with the offer of a substantial service. He had heard that you were in search of some pursuit or occupation."

"Pray, madam, I entreat of you to say nothing of this now; wait at least until Mr Butler and I shall know more of each other."

"A strange sort of a piece you have there," said Tony, in his confusion, for his cheek was scarlet with shame—"something between an old duelling-pistol and a carbine."

"It's a short Tyrol rifle, a peasant's weapon. It's not a very comely piece of ordnance, but it is very true and easy to carry. I bought it from an old chamois-hunter at Maltz; and I carried it with me this morning with the hope that you would accept it."

"Oh, I couldn't think of it; I beg you to excuse me. I'm much obliged; in fact, I never do—never did—take a present."

"That's true, sir. Tony and I bear our narrow

means only because there's a sort of rugged independence in our natures that saves us from craving for whatever we can do without."

"A pretty wide catalogue too, I assure you," said Tony, laughing, and at once recovering his wonted good-humour. "We have made what the officials call the extraordinaries fill a very small column. There!" cried he, suddenly; "is the sea-gull on that point of rock yonder out of range for your rifle?"

"Nothing near it. Will you try?" asked Maitland, offering the gun.

"I'd rather see you."

"I'm something out of practice latterly. I have been leading a town life," said Maitland, as he drew a small eye-glass from his pocket and fixed it in his eye. "Is it that fellow there you mean? There's a far better shot to the left, that large diver that is sitting so calmly on the rolling sea. There he is again."

"He's gone now—he has dived," said Tony; "there's nothing harder to hit than one of these birds—what between the motion of the sea and their own wariness. Some people say that they scent gunpowder."

"That fellow shall!" said Maitland as he fired; for just as the bird emerged from the depth, he

sighted him, and with one flutter the creature fell dead on the wave.

“A splendid shot—I never saw a finer!” cried Tony, in ecstasy, and with a look of honest admiration at the marksman. “I’d have bet ten—ay, twenty—to one you’d have missed. I’m not sure I’d not wager against your doing the same trick again.”

“You’d lose your money, then,” said Maitland; “at least, if I was rogue enough to take you up.”

“You must be one of the best shots in Europe, then!”

“No; they call me second in the Tyrol. Hans Godrel is the first. We have had many matches together, and he has always beaten me.”

The presence of a royal prince would not have inspired Tony with the same amount of respect as these few words, uttered negligently and carelessly; and he measured the speaker from head to foot, recognising for the first time his lithe and well-knit, well-proportioned figure.

“I’ll be bound you are a horseman too!” cried Tony.

“If you hadn’t praised my shooting, I’d tell you that I ride better than I shoot.”

“How I’d like to have a brush across country with you!” exclaimed Tony, warmly.

“What easier?—what so easy? Our friend Sir Arthur has an excellent stable; at least, there is more than one mount for men of our weight. I suspect Mark Lyle will not join us; but we'll arrange a match—a sort of home steeple-chase.”

“I'd like it well,” broke in Tony; “but I have no horses of my own, and I'll not ride Sir Arthur's.”

“This same independence of ours has a something about it that won't let us seem very amiable, Mr Maitland,” said the old lady, smiling.

“Pardon me, madam; it has an especial attraction for *me*. I have all my life long been a disciple of that school; but I must say that in the present case it is not applicable. I have been for the last couple of weeks a guest at Lyle Abbey, and if I were asked whose name came most often uppermost, and always in terms of praise, I should say—your son's.”

“I have met with great kindness from Sir Arthur and his family,” said Tony, half sternly, half sorrowfully. “I am not likely ever to forget it.”

“You have not seen them since your return, I think,” said Maitland, carelessly.

“No, sir,” broke in the old lady; “my son has been so full of his travels, and all the great people he met, that we have not got through more than

half of his adventures. Indeed, when you came up, he was just telling me of an audience he had with a Cabinet Minister——”

“Pooh, pooh, mother! don’t bore Mr Maitland with these personal details.”

“I know it is the privilege of friendship to listen to these,” said Maitland, “and I am sincerely sorry that I have not such a claim.”

“Well, sir, you ought to have that claim, were it only in consideration of your own kind offer to Tony.”

“Oh, pray, madam, do not speak of it,” said Maitland, with something nearer confusion than so self-possessed a gentleman was likely to exhibit. “When I spoke of such a project, I was in utter ignorance that Mr Butler was as much a man of the world as myself, and far and away beyond the reach of any guidance of mine.”

“What, then, were your intentions regarding me?” asked Tony, in some curiosity.

“I entreat of you, madam,” said Maitland, eagerly, “to forget all that we said on that subject.”

“I cannot be so ungrateful, sir. It is but fair and just that Tony should hear of your generous plan. Mr Maitland thought he’d just take you abroad—to travel with him—to go about and see the world. He’d call you his secretary.”

"His what!" exclaimed Tony, with a burst of laughter. "His what, mother?"

"Let *me* try and explain away, if I can, the presumption of such a project. Not now, however," said Maitland, looking at his watch, "for I have already overstayed my time; and I have an appointment for this evening—without you will kindly give me your company for half a mile up the road, and we can talk the matter over together."

Tony looked hesitatingly for a moment at his mother, but she said—"To be sure, Tony. I'll give Mr Maitland a loan of you for half an hour. Go with him, by all means."

With all that courtesy of which he was a master, Maitland thanked her for the sacrifice she was making, and took his leave.

"You have no objection to walk fast, I hope," said Maitland; "for I find I am a little behind my time."

Tony assented with a nod, and they stepped out briskly—the device of the speed being merely assumed to give Maitland an opportunity of seeing a little more of his companion before entering upon any serious converse. Tony, however, was as impenetrable in his simplicity as some others are in their depth; and after two or three attempts to

draw him on to talk of commonplaces, Maitland said, abruptly: "You must have thought it a great impertinence on my part to make such a proposal to your mother as she has just told you of; but the fact was, I had no other way of approaching a very difficult subject, and opening a question which to her, certainly, I could not explain myself fully upon. I heard a good deal about you up at the Abbey, and all that I heard confirmed me in the notion that you were just the man for an enterprise in which I am myself deeply interested. However, as I well knew, even if I succeeded in inducing you to become my comrade, it would be necessary to have a sort of narrative which would conceal the project from your mother, it occurred to me to get up this silly idea of a secretaryship, which I own freely may have offended you."

"Not offended; it only amused me," said Tony, good-humouredly. "I can't imagine a man less fitted for such an office than myself."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Maitland, "though I'm quite certain it would be a very unprofitable use to make of you. You are, like myself, a man of action—one to execute and do, and not merely to note and record. The fellows who write history very seldom make it; isn't that true?"

“I don’t know. I can only say, I don’t think I’m very likely to do one or the other.”

“We shall see that. I don’t concur in the opinion, but we shall see. It would be rather a tedious process to explain myself fully as to my project, but I’ll give you two or three little volumes.”

“No, no; don’t give me anything to read: if you want me to understand you, tell it out plainly, whatever it is.”

“Here goes then, and it is not my fault if you don’t fully comprehend me; but mind what I am about to reveal to you is strictly on honour, and never to be divulged to any one. I have your word for this?” They pressed hands, and he continued. “There is a Government on the Continent so undermined by secret treachery that it can no longer rely upon its own arms for defence, but is driven to enlist in its cause the brave and adventurous spirits of other countries—men who, averse to ignoble callings or monotonous labour, would rather risk life than reduce it to the mere condition of daily drudgery. To this Government, which in principle has all my sympathies, I have devoted all that I have of fortune, hope, or personal energy. I have, in a word, thrown my whole future into its cause. I have its confidence in return; and I am

enabled not only to offer a high career and a noble sphere of action, but all that the world calls great rewards, to those whom I may select to join me in its defence."

"Is it France?" asked Tony; and Maitland had to bite his lip to repress a smile at such a question.

"No, it is not France," said he, calmly; "for France, under any rule, I'd not shed one drop of my blood."

"Nor I neither!" cried Tony. "I hate Frenchmen; my father hated them, and taught me to do the same."

"So far from enlisting you to serve France, it is more than probable that in the cause I speak of you'll find yourself arrayed against Frenchmen."

"All right; I'd do that with a heart and a half; but what is the State? Is it Austria?—is it Russia?"

"Neither. If you only give me to believe that you listen favourably to my plan, you shall hear everything; and I'll tell you, besides, what I shall offer to you personally—the command of a company in an Irish regiment, with the certainty of rapid advancement, and ample means to supply yourself with all that your position requires. Is that sufficient?"

“ Quite so, if I like the cause I’m to fight for.”

“ I’ll engage to satisfy you on that head. You need but read the names of those of our own countrymen who adopt it, to be convinced that it is a high and a holy cause. I don’t suppose you have studied very deeply that great issue which our century is about to try—the cause of order *versus* anarchy—the right to rule of the good, the virtuous, and the enlightened, against the tyranny of the unlettered, the degraded, and the base.”

“ I know nothing about it.”

“ Well, I’ll tax your patience some day to listen to it all from me; for the present, what say you to my plan ?”

“ I rather like it. If it had only come last week, I don’t think I could have refused it.”

“ And why last week ?”

“ Because I have got a promise of an appointment since that.”

“ Of what nature ?—a commission in the army ?”

“ No,” said he, shaking his head.

“ They’re not going to make a clerk of a fellow like you, I trust ?”

“ They’d be sorely disappointed if they did.”

“ Well, what *are* they going to do with you ?”

“Oh, it’s nothing very high and mighty. I’m to be what they call a Queen’s Messenger.”

“Under the Foreign Office?”

“Yes.”

“Not bad things these appointments—that is to say, gentlemen hold them, and contrive to live on them. How they do so, it’s not very easy to say; but the fact is there, and not to be questioned.”

This speech, a random shot as it was, hit the mark, and Maitland saw that Tony winced under it, and he went on.

“The worst is, however, that these things lead to nothing. If a man takes to the law, he dreams of the Great Seal, or at least of the Bench. If he be a soldier, he is sure to scribble his name with Lieutenant-General before it. One always has an eye to the upper branches, whatever be the tree; but this messenger affair is a mere bush, which does not admit of climbing. Last of all, it would never do for you.”

“And why not do for me?” asked Tony, half fiercely.

“Simply because you could not reduce yourself to the mere level of a piece of mechanism—a thing wound up at Downing Street, to go ‘down’ as it reached Vienna. To you life should present, with

its changes of fortune, its variety, its adventures, and its rewards. Men like you confront dangers, but are always conquered by mere drudgery. Am I right?"

"Perhaps there is something in that."

"Don't fancy that I am talking at hazard; I have myself felt the very thing I am telling you of; and I could no more have begun life as a Cabinet postboy, than I could have taken to stone-breaking."

"You seem to forget that there is a class of people in this world whom a wise proverb declares are not to be chosers."

"There never was a sillier adage. It assumes that because a man is poor he must remain poor. It presumes to affirm that no one can alter his condition. And who are the successful in life? The men who have energy to will it—the fellows who choose their place, and insist upon taking it. Let me assure you, Butler, you are one of these, if you could only throw off your humility and believe it. Only resolve to join us, and I'll give you any odds you like that I am a true prophet; at all events turn it over in your mind—give it a fair consideration; of course, I mean your own consideration, for it is one of those things a man cannot consult his mother

upon ; and when we meet again, which will not be for a few days, as I leave for a short absence to-morrow, you'll give me your answer."

" What day do you expect to be back here ? "

" I hope by Saturday ; indeed, I can safely say by Saturday."

" By that time I shall have made up my mind. Good-bye."

" The mind is made up already," muttered Maitland, as he moved away—" I have him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ROAD.

A GREAT moralist and a profound thinker has left it on record that there were few pleasanter sensations than those of being whirled rapidly along a good road at the top speed of a pair of posters. Whether, had he lived in our age of express-trains, the "rail" might not have qualified the judgment, is not so sure. One thing is, however, certain—the charm of a brisk drive on a fine breezy morning, along a bold coast, with a very beautiful woman for a companion, is one that belongs to all eras, independent of broad gauges and narrow, and deriving none of its enjoyment from steam or science.

Maitland was to know this now in all its ecstasy, as he drove off from Lyle Abbey with Mrs Trafford. There was something of gala in the equipage—the four dappled greys with pink roses at their heads, the smartly-dressed servants, and, more than all, the

lovely widow herself, most becomingly dressed in a costume which, by favour of the climate, could combine furs with lace—that forcibly struck him as resembling the accompaniments of a wedding; and he smiled at the pleasant conceit.

“What is it amuses you, Mr Maitland?” said she, unable to repress her curiosity.

“I am afraid to tell you—that is, I might have told you a moment ago, but I can’t now.”

“Perhaps I guess it?”

“I don’t think so.”

“No matter; let us talk of something else. Isn’t that a very beautiful little bay? It was a fancy of mine once to build a cottage there. You can see the spot from here, to the left of those three rocks.”

“Yes; but there are walls there—ruins, I think.”

“No, not exactly ruins. They were the outer walls of my intended villa, which I abandoned after I had begun it; and there they stand, accusers of a change of mind, sad reminders of other days and their projects.”

“Were they very pleasant days that you sigh over them, or are they sad reminiscences?”

“Both one and the other. I thought it would be such a nice thing to retire from the world and all its vanities, and live there very secluded and forgotten.”

“And how long ago was this?”

“Oh, very long ago—fully a year and a half.”

“Indeed!” cried he, with a well-feigned astonishment.

“Yes,” said she, resuming. “I was very tired of being flattered and feted, and what people call ‘spoiled;’ for it is by no means remembered how much amusement is afforded to those who play the part of ‘spoilers’ in the wilfulness and caprice they excite; and so I thought, ‘I’ll show you all how very easy it is to live without you. I’ll let you see that I can exist without your homage.’”

“And you really fancied this?”

“You ask as if you thought the thing incredible.”

“Only difficult—not impossible.”

“I never intended total isolation, mind. I’d have had my intimates, say two or three—certainly not more—dear friends, to come and go and stay as they pleased.”

“And do you know how you’d have passed your time, or shall I tell you?”

“Yes. Let me hear your version of it.”

“In talking incessantly of that very world you had quitted, in greedily devouring all its scandals, and canvassing all its sins—criticising, very possibly its shortcomings and condemning its frivolities; but

still following with a wistful eye all its doings, and secretly longing to be in the thick of them."

"Oh, how wrong you are, how totally wrong! You know very little about him who would have been my chief adviser and Grand Vizier."

"And who, pray, would have been so fortunate as to fill that post?"

"The son of that old lady to whom you devoted so many mornings—the playfellow of long ago, Tony Butler."

"Indeed, I only made his acquaintance yesterday, and it would be rash to speak on such a short experience, but I may be permitted to ask, has he that store of resources which enliven solitude? is he so full of life's experiences that he can afford to retire from the world and live on the interest of his knowledge of mankind?"

"He knows nothing whatever of what is called life—at least what Mr Maitland would call life. He is the most simple-hearted young fellow in the world, with the finest nature, and the most generous."

"What would I not give for a friend who would grow so enthusiastic about me!"

"Are you so sure you'd deserve it?"

"If I did, there would be no merit in the praise.

Credit means trust for what one may or may not have."

"Well, I am speaking of Tony as I know him; and, true to the adage, there he is, coming down the hill. Pull up, George."

"Mr Butler's making me a sign, ma'am, not to stop till I reach the top of the hill."

The moment after, the spanking team stood champing their bits and tossing their manes on the crest of the ridge.

"Come here, Tony, and be scolded!" cried Mrs Trafford; while the young fellow, instead of approaching the carriage, busied himself about the horses.

"Wait a moment till I let down their heads. How could you have suffered them to come up the long hill with the bearing-reins on, Alice?" cried he.

"So, then, it is I that am to have the scolding," said she, in a whisper; then added aloud, "Come here and beg pardon. I'm not sure you'll get it, for your shameful desertion of us. Where have you been, sir? and why have not you reported yourself on your return?"

Tony came up to the side of the carriage with an attempt at swagger that only increased his own

confusion, and made him blush deeply. No sooner, however, had he seen Maitland, of whose presence up to that he had been ignorant, than he grew pale, and had to steady himself by catching hold of the door.

“I see you are ashamed,” said she, “but I’ll keep you over for sentence. Meanwhile let me present you to Mr Maitland.”

“I know him,” said Tony, gulping out the words.

“Yes,” chimed in Maitland, “we made acquaintance yesterday; and if Mr Butler be but of my mind, it will not be a mere passing knowledge we shall have of each other.”

“Get in, Tony, and come a mile or two with us. You know all the short cuts in the mountains, and can get back easily.”

“There’s the short cut I mean to take now,” said Tony, sternly, as he pointed to a path that led down to the sea-shore. “I am going home.”

“Yes, sir,” resumed she, with a well-feigned air of severity—“but mine is a command.”

“I have left the service—I have taken my discharge,” said he, with a forced laugh.

“At least, you ought to quit with honour—not as a deserter,” said she, softly, but sadly.

“Perhaps he could not trust his resolution, if he

were to see again the old flag he had served under," said Maitland.

"Who made you the exponent of what I felt, sir?" said he, savagely—"I don't remember that in our one single conversation we touched on these things."

"Tony!" cried Alice, in a low voice, full of deep feeling and sorrow—"Tony!"

"Good-bye, Alice; I'm sorry to have detained you, but I thought—I don't know what I thought. Remember me to Bella—good-bye!" He turned away—then suddenly, as if remembering himself, wheeled round and said, "Good morning, sir," with a short quick nod of his head. The moment after he had sprung over the low wall at the road-side, and was soon lost to view in the tall ferns.

"How changed he is! I declare I can scarcely recognise him," said Mrs Trafford, as they resumed their journey. "He used to be the gentlest, easiest, softest of all natures. Never put out—never crossed by anything."

"And so I've no doubt you'd have found him to-day if I had not been here."

"What do you mean?"

"Surely you remarked the sudden change that came over his face when he saw me. He thought

you were alone. At all events, he never speculated on finding me at your side."

"Indeed!" said she, with an air of half-offended pride; "and are you reputed to be such a very dangerous person, that to drive out with you should inspire all this terror?"

"I don't believe I am," said Maitland, laughing; "but perhaps your rustic friend might be pardoned if he thought so."

"How very subtle that is! Even in your humility you contrive to shoot a bolt at poor Tony."

"And why poor? Is he poor who is so rich in defenders? Is it a sign of poverty when a man can afford to dispense with all the restraints that attach to others, and say and do what he likes, with the certainty that it will all be submitted to? I call that wealth unbounded—at least, it is the one prize that money confers; and if one can have it without the dross, I'd say, Give me the privilege and keep the title-deeds."

"Mr Maitland," said she, gravely, "Tony Butler is not in the least like what you would represent him. In my life I never knew any one so full of consideration for others."

"Go on," said he, laughing. "It's only another

gold mine of his you are displaying before me. Has he any other gifts or graces?"

"He has a store of good qualities, Mr Maitland; they are not, perhaps, very showy ones."

"Like those of some other of our acquaintance," added he, as if finishing her speech for her. "My dear Mrs Trafford, I would not disparage your early friend—your once playfellow—for the world. Indeed, I feel, if life could be like a half-holiday from school, he'd be an admirable companion to pass it with: the misfortune is, that these men must take their places in the common tournament with the rest of us, and then they are not so certain of making a distinguished figure as when seen in the old playground with bat and ball and wicket."

"You mean that such a man as Tony Butler will not be likely to make a great career in life?"

His reply was a shrug of the shoulders.

"And why not, pray?" asked she, defiantly.

"What if you were to ask Mark this question? Let him give you his impressions on this theme."

"I see what it is," cried she, warmly. "You two fine gentlemen have conspired against this poor simple boy—for really, in all dealings with the world, he is a boy; and you would like us to believe that, if we saw him under other circumstances,

and with other surroundings, we should be actually ashamed of him. Now, Mr Maitland, I resent this supposition at once, and I tell you frankly I am very proud of his friendship."

" You are pushing me to the verge of a great indiscretion ; in fact, you have made it impossible for me to avoid it," said he, seriously. " I must now trust you with a secret, or what I meant to be one. Here it is. Of course, what I am about to tell you is strictly to go no further—never to be divulged. It is partly on this young man's account—chiefly so—that I am in Ireland. A friend of mine—that same Caffarelli of whom you heard—was commissioned by a very eccentric old Englishman who lives abroad, to learn if he could hear some tidings of this young Butler—what sort of person he was, how brought up, how educated, how disciplined. The inquiry came from the desire of a person very able indeed to befriend him materially. The old man I speak of is the elder brother of Butler's father ; very rich and very influential. This old man, I suppose, repenting of some harshness or other to his brother in former days, wants to see Tony—wants to judge of him for himself—wants, in fact, without disclosing the relationship between them, to pronounce whether this young

fellow is one to whom he could rightfully bequeath a considerable fortune, and place before the world as the head of an honoured house ; but he wants to do this without exciting hopes or expectations, or risking perhaps disappointments. Now I know very well by repute something of this eccentric old man, whose long life in the diplomatic service has made him fifty times more lenient to a moral delinquency than to a solecism in manners, and who could forgive the one and never the other. If he were to see your diamond in the rough, he'd never contemplate the task of polishing—he'd simply say, 'This is not what I looked for ; I don't want a gamekeeper, or a boatman, or a horse-breaker.'"

"Oh ! Mr Maitland."

"Hear me out. I am representing, and very faithfully representing, another ; he'd say this more strongly too than I have, and he'd leave him there. Now, I'm not very certain that he'd be wrong ; permit me to finish. I mean to say, that in all that regards what the old minister-plenipotentiary acknowledges to be life, Master Tony would not shine. The solid qualities you dwelt on so favourably are like rough carvings ; they are not meant for gilding. Now, seeing the deep interest you and all your family take in this youth, and feeling as I do a

sincere regard for the old lady his mother, in whose society I have passed two or three delightful mornings, I conceived a sort of project which might possibly give the young fellow a good chance of success. I thought of taking him abroad—on the Continent—showing him something of life and the world in a sphere in which he had not yet seen it ; letting him see for himself the value men set upon tact and address, and making him feel that these are the common coinage daily intercourse requires, while higher qualities are title-deeds that the world only calls for on emergencies.”

“But you could never have persuaded him to such a position of dependence.”

“I’d have called him my private secretary ; I’d have treated him as my equal.”

“It was very generous ; it was nobly generous.”

“When I thought I had made him presentable anywhere—and it would not take long to do so—I’d have contrived to bring him under his uncle’s notice,—as a stranger, of course : if the effect were favourable, well and good ; if it proved a failure, there was neither disappointment nor chagrin. Mrs Butler gave me a half assent, and I was on the good road with her son till this morning, when that unlucky meeting has, I suspect, spoiled everything.”

“But why should it?”

“Why should anything happen as men’s passions or impulses decide it? Why should one man be jealous of the good fortune that another man has not won?”

She turned away her head and was silent.

“I’d not have told you one word of this, Mrs Trafford, if I had not been so sore pressed that I couldn’t afford to let you, while defending your friend, accuse me of want of generosity and unfairness. Let me own it frankly—I was piqued by all your praises of this young man; they sounded so like insidious criticisms on others less fortunate in your favour.”

“As if the great Mr Maitland could care for any judgments of mine,” said she; and there was in her voice and manner a strange blending of levity and seriousness.

“They are the judgments that he cares most for in all the world,” said he, eagerly. “To have heard from your lips one-half the praise—one-tenth part of the interest you so lately bestowed on that young man——”

“Where are we going, George? What river is this?” exclaimed she, suddenly.

“To Tilney Park, ma’am; this is the Larne.”

"But it's the upper road, and I told you to take the lower road, by Captain Graham's."

"No, ma'am; you only said Tilney."

"Is it possible? and didn't you tell him, Mr Maitland?"

"I? I knew nothing of the road. To tell you the truth," added he, in a whisper, "I cared very little where it led, so long as I sat at your side."

"Very flattering, indeed! Have we passed the turn to the lower road very far, George?"

"Yes, ma'am; it's a good five miles behind us, and a bad bit of road too—all fresh stones."

"And you were so anxious to call at the cottage?" said she, addressing Maitland, with a smile of some significance.

"Nothing of the kind. I made some sort of silly promise to make a visit as I passed. I'm sure I don't know why, or to gratify whom."

"Oh, cruel Mr Maitland—false Mr Maitland! how can you say this? But are we to go back?—that is the question; for I see George is very impatient, and trying to make the horses the same."

"Of course not. Go back! it was all the coachman's fault—took the wrong turning, and never discovered his blunder till we were—I don't know where."

"Tilney, George—go on," said she; then turning to Maitland, "And do you imagine that the charming Sally Graham or the fascinating Rebecca will understand such flimsy excuses as these, or that the sturdy old Commodore will put up with them?"

"I hope so, for their sakes at least; for it will save them a world of trouble to do so."

"Ungrateful as well as perfidious! You were a great favourite with the Grahams. Beck told me, the night before they left the Abbey, that you were the only 'élégant'—exquisite she called it—she ever met that wasn't a fool."

"The praise was not extravagant. I don't feel my cheek growing hot under it."

"And Sally said that if she had not seen with her own eyes, she'd never have believed that a man with such a diamond ring, and such wonderful pendants to his watch, could hook an eight-pound salmon, and bring him to land."

"That indeed touches me," said he, laying his hand over his heart.

"And old Graham himself declared to my father that if one of his girls had a fancy that way, though you weren't exactly his style of man, nor precisely what he'd choose——"

“Do spare me. I beseech you, have *some* pity on me.”

“That he'd not set himself against it; and that, in fact, with a good certificate as to character, and the approved guarantee of respectable people, who had known you some years——”

“I implore you to stop.”

“Of course I'll stop when you tell me the theme is one too delicate to follow up; but, like all the world, you let one run into every sort of indiscretion, and only cry halt when it is too late to retire. The Grahams, however, are excellent people—old G. G., as they call him, a distinguished officer. He cut out somebody or something from under the guns of a Spanish fort, and the girls have refused—let me see whom they have not refused; but I'll make them tell you, for we'll certainly call there on our way back.”

The malicious drollery with which she poured out all this had heightened her colour and given increased brilliancy to her eyes. Instead of the languid delicacy which usually marked her features, they shone now with animation and excitement, and became in consequence far more beautiful. So striking was the change, that Maitland paid little attention to the words, while he gazed with rapture at the speaker.

It must have been a very palpable admiration he bestowed, for she drew down her veil with an impatient jerk of the hand, and said, "Well, sir, doesn't this arrangement suit you, or would you rather make your visit to Port-Graham alone?"

"I almost think I would," said he, laughing. "I suspect it would be safer."

"Oh, now that I know your intentions—that you have made me your confidant—you'll see that I can be a marvel of discretion."

"Put up your veil again, and you may be as *maligne* as you please."

"There! yonder is Tilney," said she, hastily—"where you see those fine trees. Are the horses distressed, George?"

"Well, ma'am, they've had enough of it."

"I mean, are they too tired to go round by the river-side and the old gate?"

"It's a good two miles round, ma'am."

"Oh, I know what that means," said she, in a whisper. "If there should be anything amiss for the next three months, it will be that cruel day's work down at Tilney will be charged with it. Go in by the new lodge," added she, aloud; "and as they have innumerable carriages here, Mr Maitland, I'll take you a drive over there to-morrow. It's a very

nice thing, isn't it, to be as rich as old Mrs Maxwell, and to be always playing the part of 'Good Fairy,' giving splendid banquets, delicious little country parties to all the world; offering horses to ride, boats to sail in? What *are* you looking at so fixedly?"

"I think I recognise a conveyance I once had the happiness to travel in. Isn't that the Graham equipage before us?"

"I declare it is!" cried she, joyfully. "Oh, lucky Mr Maitland; they are going to Tilney."

As she spoke, George, indignant at being dusted by a shambling old mare with long fetlocks, gathered up his team in hand, and sent them "spinning" past the lumbering jaunting-car, giving the Grahams only time to recognise the carriage and its two occupants.

CHAPTER XIX.

TONY'S TROUBLES.

WHEN Tony Butler met Mrs Trafford's carriage he was on his road, by a cross path, to the back entrance of Lyle Abbey. It was not his intention to pay a visit there at that moment, though he was resolved to do so later. His present errand was to convey a letter he had written to Maitland, accepting the proposal of the day before.

He had not closed his eyes all night thinking of it. There was a captivation in its promise of adventure that he felt to be irresistible. He knew too well the defects of his nature and of his intelligence not to be aware that, in any of the ordinary and recognised paths in life, he must see himself overtaken and left behind by almost all. What were called the learned professions were strictly barred to him. Had he even the means for the study he would not have the qualities to pursue them. He did not feel that he could take willingly to a

trade; as little could he be a clerk. To be sure, he had obtained this appointment as messenger, but how disparagingly Maitland had spoken of it! He said, it is true, they "weren't bad things"—that "gentlemen somehow or other managed to live on them;" but he hinted that these were gentlemen whose knowledge of life had taught them a variety of little accomplishments—such as whist, billiards, and écarté—which form the traffic of society, and a very profitable traffic too, to him who knows a little more of them than his neighbours. Worst of all, it was a career, Maitland said, that led to nothing. You can become an "old messenger," if you live long enough, but nothing more; and he pictured the life of a traveller who had lost every interest in the road he journeyed—who, in fact, only thought of it with reference to the time it occupied—as one of the dreariest of all imaginable things. "This monotony," added he, "will do for the fellow who has seen everything and done everything—not for the fresh spirit of youth, eager to taste, to learn, and to enjoy. A man of your stamp ought to have a wider and better field—a sphere wherein his very vitality will have fair-play. Try it; follow it if you can, Butler," said he; "but I'm much mistaken in you, if you'll be satisfied to sit down with a station that

only makes you a penny-postman magnified." Very few of us have courage to bear such a test as this—to hear the line we are about to take, the service we are about to enter, the colony we are about to sail for, disparaged, unmoved. The unknown has always enough of terror about it without the dark forebodings of an evil prophet.

"I like Maitland's project better," said Tony, after a long night's reflection. "At all events, it's the sort of thing to suit *me*. If I should come to grief, it will be a sad day for poor mother; but the same might happen me when carrying a despatch-bag! I think he ought to have been more explicit, and let me hear for whom I am to fight, though perhaps it doesn't much signify. I could fight for any one but Yankees! I think I'll say 'done.' This Maitland is a great 'Don'—has apparently fortune and station. It can't be a mistake to sail in the same boat with *him*. I'll certainly say 'done.'" With this resolve he jumped out of bed, and wrote the following brief note:—

"BURNSIDE, Tuesday morning.

"DEAR SIR,—I'll not take the three days you gave me to consider your offer; I accept it at once.
—Yours truly,

"TONY BUTLER.

"NORMAN MAITLAND, Esq.,
Lyle Abbey."

“I’ll have to write to Skeffy,” said he to himself, “and say, You may tell my noble patron that I don’t want the messengership, and that when next I call at the Office I’ll kick Willis for nothing. I don’t suppose that this is the formal way of resigning, but I take it they’ll not be sorry to be quit of me, and it will spare the two old coves in white cravats all the trouble of having me plucked at the examination. Poor Skeffy won’t be pleased, though; he was to have ‘coached me’ in foreign tongues and the Rule of Three. Well, I’m glad I’m in for a line of life where nobody asks about Colenso’s Arithmetic, nor has so much as heard of Ollendorf’s Method. Oh dear! how much happier the world must have been when people weren’t so confoundedly well-informed!—so awfully brimful of all knowledge as they now are! In those pleasant days, instead of being a black sheep, I’d have been pretty much like the rest of the flock.”

The speculations on this topic—this golden age of ignorance and bliss—occupied him all the way, as he walked over the hills to leave his letter at the gate-lodge for Mr Maitland.

Resisting all the lodge-keeper’s inducements to talk—for he was an old friend of Tony’s, and wanted much to know where he had been and what doing

of late, and why he wasn't up at the Abbey every day as of yore—Tony refused to hear of all the sad consequences that had followed on his absence; how the "two three-year-olds had gone back in their training;" how "Piper wouldn't let a saddle be put on his back;" how the carp were all dying in the new pond, nobody knew why—there was even something gone wrong with the sun-dial over the stable, as though the sun himself had taken his departure in dudgeon, and wouldn't look straight on the spot since. These were, with many more, shouted after him as he turned away, while he, laughing, called out, "It will be all right in a day or two, Mat. I'll see to everything soon."

"That I'll not," muttered he to himself when alone. "The smart hussar—the brave captain—may try his hand now. I'd like to see him on Piper. I only wish that he may mount him with the saddle tightly girthed; and if he doesn't cut a somerset over his head, my name isn't Tony! Let us see, too, what he'll do with those young dogs; they're wild enough by this time! I take it he's too great a swell to know anything about gardening or grafting—so much the worse for my lady's flower-plot! There's one thing I'd like to be able to do every morning of my life," thought he, in

sadder mood—"just to give Alice's chestnut mare one canter, to make her neck flexible and her mouth light, and to throw her back on her haunches. And then, if I could only see Alice on her! just to see her as she bends down over the mane and pats the mare's shoulder to coax her not to buck-leap! There never was a picture that equalled it! the mare snorting, and with eyes flashing, and Alice all the while caressing her, and saying, 'How silly you are, Maida! come, now, do be gentle!'"

These thoughts set others in motion—the happy, happy days of long ago; the wild, half-reckless gallops over the fern-clad hills in the clear bright days of winter—or the still more delightful saunterings of a summer's eve on the sea-shore!—none of them—not one—ever to come back again. It was just as his reveries had reached so far that he caught sight of the four dappled greys—they were Alice's own—swinging smoothly along in that long easy stride, by which thoroughbreds persuade you that work is no distress to them. It was only as they breasted the hill that he saw that the bearing-reins were not let down—a violation of a precept on which he was inexorable; and he hastened, with all the speed he could, to catch them ere they gained the crest of the ridge.

To say the truth, Tony was somewhat ashamed of himself for his long absence from the Abbey. If it was not ingratitude, it had a look of it. *They* knew nothing of what had passed between Mark and himself, and could only pronounce upon his conduct as fickleness, or worse; and he was glad of an opportunity to meet them less formally than by a regular morning visit. Either Alice and her sister, or Alice alone, were certain to be in the carriage; for Lady Lyle was too timid to trust herself with those "greys;" and so he bounded forward, his heart full of expectancy, and burning once more to hear that voice whose very chidings were as music to him.

He was close to the carriage before he saw Maitland; indeed, the sight of Alice, as he drew near, had so entranced him that he saw nothing else; but when his eyes did fall on her companion, a pang shot through him as though he had been stabbed. In the raging jealousy of the moment everything was forgotten but his passion—his hatred of that man. He'd have given his right hand to be able to hurl at him a mortal defiance—to have dared him to the death. Indeed, so far as the insolence of his stare could convey his meaning, it declared an open war between them.

Nor did Maitland's attitude assuage this anger ; he lay back with a cool assumption of superiority —an air of triumphant satisfaction—that seemed to say, Each of us is in the place that befits him.

So overcome was he by passion, that even Alice's invitation to get into the carriage sounded like an outrage to his ears. It was bitter enough to cast him off without making him witness the success of another. Maitland's daring to apologise for him —to explain away why he had or had not done this, that, or t'other—was more than his endurance could brook ; and as he hurried away from the spot, dashing recklessly down cliff and crag, and sprang from rock to rock without a thought of the peril, he almost accused himself of cowardice and cold-bloodedness for not having insulted him on the instant, and, by some open outrage, forced upon him a quarrel from which there could be no retreating. “If I'd insulted him before her,” cried he, “he never could have evaded me by calling me an angry boy.”

“I'll have no companionship with him, at all events,” said he, suddenly checking himself in his speed ; “he shall neither be leader nor comrade of mine. I'll get my letter back before it reach him.” With this resolve he turned his steps back again

to the Abbey. Although he knew well that he must reach the lodge before they could return from their drive, he hurried along as though his life depended on it. The keeper was out, but Tony dashed into the lodge, and found, as he expected, the letter on the chimney; he tore it into fragments, and turned away.

The day was already drawing to a close as he descended the little path to the Burnside, and saw his mother awaiting him in the porch. As he came nearer, he perceived that she held up a letter in her hand. "Something important, Tony dear," cried she. "It is printed at top, 'On H.M.'s Service,' and marked 'Immediate' underneath. I have been very impatient all the day for your return."

Although Tony's mood at the moment did not dispose him to be on the very best terms with the world at large, nor even with himself, he felt a strange sort of vainglorious glow through him at being addressed on a great square-shaped envelope, "On Her Majesty's Service," and with a huge seal, the royal arms, affixed. It imparted a sense of self-importance that was very welcome at such a moment. It was a spoonful of brandy to a man not far from fainting.

With all this, he didn't like his mother to see

how much this gratified or interested him ; and he tossed the letter to one side, and said, " I hope the dinner isn't far off ; I'm very hungry."

" It will be on the table in a few minutes, Tony ; but let us hear what Her Majesty wants with you."

" It's nothing that won't keep till I have eaten my dinner, mother ; at all events, I don't mean to inquire."

" I suppose I may break the seal myself, then," said she, in a half-pique.

" If you like—if you have any curiosity in the matter."

" That I have," said she, tearing open the envelope.

" Why, it's nothing, after all, Tony. It's not from Her Majesty at all. It begins 'Dear Butler.' "

" It's from Skeffy," cried he, taking it from her hands, " and is far more interesting to me than if it came from the Premier."

Mrs Butler sat down, disappointed and sad. It was a reminiscence of long ago, that formally-shaped document, with its big seal, reminding her of days when the Colonel—her Colonel—used to receive despatches from the War Office—grave documents of which he seldom spoke, but whose importance she could read in the thoughtful lines of his face, and which always impressed her with

his consequence. "Ah, dear!" sighed she, drearily,—"who would have thought it?"

So is it very often in this same world of ours, that the outsides of things are only solemn cheats. The orderly who terrifies the village as he dashes past at speed, is but the bearer of an invitation to dine. The ambassador's bag is filled not with protocols and treaties, but with fish-sauce or pickled walnuts; the little sack—marked 'most important'—being choke-full of Russian cigarettes. Even lawn and lawyers' wigs are occasionally the external coverings to qualities that fall short of absolute wisdom; so that though Mrs Butler exclaimed, "Who would have thought it?" one more conversant with life would have felt less surprise and less disappointment.

A laugh from Tony—almost a hearty laugh—startled her from her musings. "What is it, Tony dear?" asked she—"what is it that amuses you?"

"I'll read it all for you, mother. It's from Skeffy, and you'd think you heard him talking, it's so like him.

" 'F. O., *Sunday morning.*

" 'DEAR BUTLER,—What a fright you have given us all, old fellow, to have levanted so suddenly,

leaving your traps with the waiter, as we first thought, but, as we afterwards discovered, exchanging them with one Rory Quin; who, apparently sorry for his bargain, came for three successive mornings to the hotel to find out your present whereabouts.'

"Do you understand him, mother?" asked Tony at this.

"Partly—go on."

He resumed—"Rory, however, would seem to have a private scrape of his own to occupy him now, for I found to-day that a policeman was waiting all the morning to arrest him, of which he seems to have had timely notice, for he did not appear, and "R. 960" says, with much solemnity, he won't come no more."

"What does that mean, Tony?"

"I can make nothing of it. I hope and trust that I am not the cause of the poor fellow's troubles. I'll write about this at once. 'More of all this, however, when we meet, which I rejoice to say will be soon. I have got fourteen days' leave, and am going over to your immediate neighbourhood, to visit an aunt, or a cousin, or a grandmother—if she likes—a certain Mrs Maxwell of Tilney, who has lots of cash and no one to leave it to—five thousand

a-year in estate ; I don't know what in the Threes ; and is, they tell me, weighing all her relatives, real or imaginary, in the balance of her esteem, to decide who is to be the lord of Tilney, and which of us would most worthily represent her name and house. Preaching for a call is nothing to this—and a C. S. examination is cakes and gingerbread to it. Just fancy a grand competitive dinner of both sexes, and the old lady watching who ate of her favourite dish, or who passed the decanter she "affectioned." Imagine yourself talking, moving, sneezing, smiling, or blowing your nose, with five thousand a-year on the issue. Picture to your mind the tortures of a scrutiny that may take in anything from your complexion to your character, and which, though satisfied with your morals, might discover "something unpleasing about your mouth."

"Worst news of all, I hear that the great Norman Maitland is somewhere in your vicinity, and of course will be invited wherever anything is going on. If he cares to do it, I suppose he'll cut us all out, and that the old lady would rather fancy she made a graceful exit from life if this illustrious swell were to play chief mourner to her. By the way, do you know the man I'm talking of ? He's a monstrous clever fellow, and a great mystery to

boot. I know him very slightly; indeed, so slightly that I'm not sure he knows *me*.

“As it would be invaluable to me to have a word of counsel from you, knowing nothing, or next to nothing, of my dear relative, I mean to start directly for you at once, and have one day with you before I go on to Tilney. Will this bore you, or inconvenience you? Is your house full? Most houses are at this time o' year.”

At this Tony laid down the letter and laughed immoderately; not so, however, his mother. She turned her head away, and sat, with her hands closely locked, in silence.

“Isn't it good?—isn't it downright droll, mother, to ask if our house be so full of guests, we have no room for another? I declare, though it has a sore side to it, the question overcomes me with its absurdity.”

“That's not the way I'm looking at it, Tony,” said she, sadly.

“But there's no other way to look at it. If one can't take that view of it, one would——” He stopped suddenly, for he saw the old lady lift her handkerchief to her eyes, and hold it there. “But you are right, mother,” said he, quickly. “To bear it well, one needn't laugh at it. At all events, what answer are we to make him?”

“Finish the letter first.”

"Ah, this is all about putting him up—anywhere—in a dressing-room or a closet. 'At Carlscourt last year they had nothing to give me but a bathroom. They used to quiz me about sleeping in "marble halls," for I lay in the bath.'"

"He seems a good-tempered creature," said the old lady, who could not repress a laugh this time.

"The best in the world; and such spirits! I wish you saw him do the back-somerset over a chair, or the frog's leap across a table. For all that, mother," said he, with a change of tone, "he's a perfect gentleman; and though he's very short—only so high!—he looks a gentleman, too."

"I am not likely to forget all his kindness to you, Tony," said she, feelingly. "If we could only receive him suitably, I'd be happy and proud to do it; as it is, however, the man, being a gentleman, will put up all the better with our humble entertainment: so just tell him to come, Tony; but tell him also what he's coming to. His room will be pretty much like the bath-room, and the company he'll meet afterwards very unlike what he saw at the fine house."

"He'll take all in good part, or I'm much mistaken in him. So here goes for the answer:—

“DEAR SKEFF,—We live in a cottage with five rooms. We have one maid-servant, and we dine at two. If you have courage to face all this, you'll have the heartiest of welcomes from my mother and your sincere friend,

“TONY BUTLER.

“The mail will drop you at Coleraine, and I'll be on the look-out for you every morning from this forward.”

“Won't that do, mother?” asked he.

“I think you might have done it better; but I suppose you young folk understand each other best in your own fashion, so let it be.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

